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Jeanne de Beir



In the Eagle's Claws

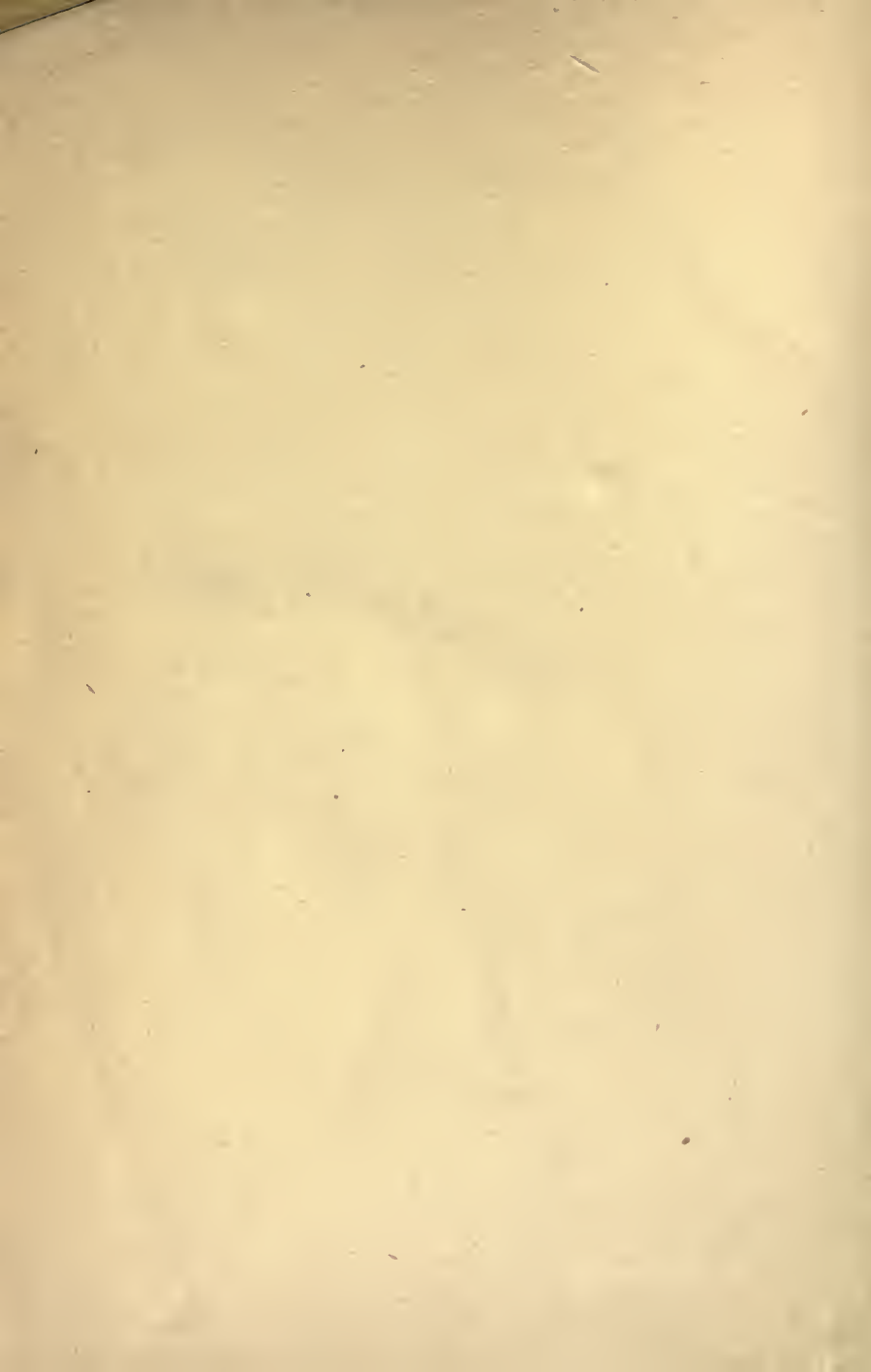


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# In the Eagle's Claws

J de Beir  
Née Jeannne Lorrjick  
le 5/12/1874

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## PREFACE

For thirty-seven months during the War I endured the greatest physical and mental sufferings and when, during the long winter evenings, I relate the story, my friends urge me to put my memoirs into writing. It is in deference to this wish that I have endeavoured to relate as clearly as possible, my war experiences. Any defects in the manner of relation I hope will be excused as they are due to my having received no great schooling as a child.

It has been necessary for obvious reasons in some cases to designate those who figure in the story merely by an initial but the narrative itself is a true record of my own adventures during those arduous years.

Ten years have elapsed since my release from prison; I write my book for all those who, having lived through the tragedy of the war years, may like to remind themselves of it; I write too for the

generation, still young ten years ago, and for posterity that they may understand something of what war means and perhaps arouse in their hearts feelings of patriotic love and gratitude for those who suffered and died for their country.

May they cherish for ever the glorious memory of those who fought and suffered for their country, and of those who laid down their lives that she might live.

**Jeanne de Beir**

*Croix de Guerre Française.*



## CHAPTER I.

I was born at Bruges in Belgium on the 5th December 1874, where I lived with my parents until, at 19 years of age, I married and went to live with my husband at Dunkirk in France where he was employed at the railway station.

We lived very happily at Dunkirk, three children, one boy and two girls being born to us, until after ten years of married life I had the misfortune to lose my husband. In consideration of my husband's service I was given charge of the bookstall and by hard work was able to bring up my children.

Dunkirk is normally a quiet, sleepy little town so you can imagine the general upheaval when in August 1914, war was declared! Mobilization, with soldiers arriving from all sides. The mobs at the station! Nothing having been foreseen, there was neither clothing nor lodging so we all had to help as best we could to distribute food to the troops. Then began the endless procession of refugees through the station.

You who live in England can have little idea of their sufferings. At a moment's notice these poor people had been forced to abandon their homes, wrapping up into small parcels their most cherished possessions and, with death in their souls, go out into the unknown, fleeing before the enemy hords which pursued them as relentlessly as the waves on the seashore — brutes sowing terror everywhere, devastating everything and respecting nothing.

At Dunkirk station panic was general. The Grand Place Jean-Bart was packed with refugees but still they poured in by every road.

My son Joseph had collected 35 of these poor people and brought them to the house, until there was no longer a vacant corner anywhere; when he collected another party and took them to his school-master's house and then, with some of his school friends, went to collect straw on which they could sleep — if sleep would come to them.

Every day the same thing was repeated, until the town was crowded with refugees who went miserably from door to door begging for bread. The bread destined for the soldiers was kept in one of the station outbuildings, and in order to help the wretched refugees I went every day to ask the Captain for some, but, on the third day, he had to refuse saying that he had barely enough for the soldiers. He was only doing his duty, of course, but the refugees were

hungrily awaiting my return and, as I would not go back to them empty, handed I climbed over the barrier, filled my sack as full as possible and hiding myself and my booty hurried off to feed my huge family.

Many heart-rending scenes were to be witnessed at the station every day and they still come before my mind's eye as if they had happened only yesterday.

One lady arrived at the station from Lille. She told me that she was fleeing from the shells, which at this time were raining thickly enough on Dunkirk. At this she left me and... what a fatality! Scarcely had she entered the Rue de Dunkerque when a shell fell there at the same moment and she was killed outright, she and a child who was walking a few paces in front of her. This lady leaving her home at Lille came to Dunkirk only to find the very death from which she had fled. After this the shelling was a daily occurrence in Dunkirk.

About three o'clock one morning, the house next to mine was almost destroyed by a shell. The first shock over, we went to see what had happened, and, judge of our astonishment; for although nearly the whole house was destroyed; a piece of the first storey remained attached to the next house. And just a piece of the floor supported a bed, in which a woman and a baby were lying. What to do! Everybody called out to her not to move. We expected every moment to see this corner of the house collapse, also; how to rescue them

was a great problem because there was nothing against which to rest the ladders. For three hours a crowd of spectators followed with anxiety the work of the rescuers: until at last their efforts were crowned with success, when everybody breathed again. We congratulated the rescuers and kissed the baby and the mother, for truly, both of them had just had a miraculous escape.

When the alms-houses at Furnes had to be evacuated, in what a lamentable condition these poor old people arrived at our station! The captain in charge of the rationing of the soldiers, sent me on his own account to fetch some cakes to give to these unfortunates while Monsieur Bourignon, the stationmaster, sent his maid with warm milk. A stretcher, with a woman on it, was lying in the middle of the waiting-room and I went up to give her some sweets and chocolate which, to my surprise, she refused. She seemed to be very old and her eyes filled with tears as she told me that she was paralysed. I then raised her head and gave her some milk to drink, just like a child. Hers was a sad story. She had just given birth to a child and her husband, in order to provide for the needs of the family, went among the soldiers every day selling tobacco, postcards, etc. One evening a shell fell on their little house. The shock was so great that after three days' confinement, the poor mother was found to be paralysed. The husband was probably a victim of this same explosion as he was

never seen again. The poor baby cried for food but, you can imagine the anguish of the mother, who was unable to lift her little son out of the cradle at her side. What she must have suffered mentally! After two days, there were no more cries... and five days later some soldiers found the baby dead by the side of the bed on which his mother lay stretched — the mother who had suffered so cruelly in not being able to suckle her little one. In spite of her appearance of age she was only thirty-one.

In another corner of the room an old priest of 81 steadily refused the milk which was offered to him, saying, « No thank you, I can do without it; give it to the old people. » What sublime self-denial in this apostolic heart, which, at 81 still thought himself young! The intervention of a passing nun was necessary before he could be induced to take any food.

The next day still more refugees arrived — the miseries of yesterday were forgotten in pity at the fresh tragedies of to-day.

However, among all the pityful scenes which we witnessed, an incident occurred one day at the station which really made us laugh. A cart arrived one morning on which two country people were perched precariously, for the cart seemed to be a travelling household and, in fact, it carried everything of their personal property which they could possibly crowd on it package after package of extraordinary dimensions,

although the whole lot was nearly valueless. When they unloaded the cart we noticed among the other junk an old worn-out iron stove, incredibly rusty and not worth five francs. At last to our astonishment they also unloaded a large tub containing — no you will never guess — a live pig! In spite of all the distress of the moment, we had great difficulty not to laugh outright. All the same, the two yokels having dragged these precious possessions about all night had no intention of leaving them in Dunkirk — they wanted them loaded on the train. There was barely standing room for the refugees themselves in the train, still less for the stove and much less for the tub with its illustrious tenant. The couple complained so loudly that eventually the police had to intervene to keep order and shepherd them on to the train leaving the pathetic remnants of their home stranded on the platform. This scene, which I have tried to describe, was certainly the only one which made us laugh, for every day the war news was more alarming.

A telegram asking for reinforcements arrived one evening at the station and the 110th Regiment, which was then billeted in the town, left at once for the Belgian Front. It was about midnight when they left, as we supposed, for Namur. Oh, these brave poilus who left so enthusiastically with the shout, « We'll get 'em »! Poor boys! Most of them were never to see



their homes again, for a few days later came the sad news that they had nearly all been killed.

Every day now saw fresh departures for the Front. All our youth, so handsome, so eager, left, and though smiling approval at their bravery and high spirits, after the last « au revoir » at the station, wives and mothers returned home, heavy at heart, all anxiety as to whether they would indeed ever see their loved ones again.

It was about this time also that my son Joseph, although only just eighteen, said to me, « Mother, I must go too. I want to do my duty like the rest. » A heart-rending farewell... « Courage, my boy! It is for your country. Don't forget your mother. I shall be praying for you. » He left!

## CHAPTER II.

### I join the Secret Service.

In June, 1915, the special Commissioner at the station, M. Delbove came to see me and asked if I would like to work for France. After receiving a few details, I accepted almost immediately, for when I asked about my daughter Marie, M. Delbove said that she could take my place at the bookstall and work under M. Vaucher and that he would himself be responsible for her welfare.

My son had just joined up; my elder daughter, Ghislaine, was living with my sister, Madame Forrier, at Bruges so that, with Marie provided for, I was free to enrol in the Secret Service. The next morning, M. Delbove drove me in his car to Malo-les-Bains to meet M. Robert of the Intelligence Service. Monsieur Robert asked me a few questions, and told me I must be prepared for many annoyances in the work and certainly difficulties. He then asked if I were prepared to go on with it and whether I thought I could keep my head if I got into a tight corner.



I said I thought I could take care of myself and if he thought me suitable I was prepared to take up my duties at once, as I agreed beforehand to all he asked or ordered me to do. My name was then inscribed on the list of personnel and I returned with M. Delbove to Dunkirk.

The next day Monsieur Robert came to see me at Dunkirk and gave me:

1. My military pass for Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Folkestone and return allowing me to travel by boat and train. The pass also contained a very detailed description of myself and at the bottom, « Civil and Military authorities should give assistance and protection to the bearer. Laissez passer. »
2. Some very light paper, specially made for the Secret Service. After writing my notes on this paper the sheets could be folded into a very small compass and fixed in a case to the leg of a pigeon.
3. Four pigeons.
4. A detailed letter of instructions, as follows :  
« On arrival at Folkestone, report yourself to Commandant Wallner at 87, Sandgate Road (enter by the door marked 'British School of Languages') Leave with the Commandant your violet passport which must on no account be carried in Holland. This passport will be

returned to you when you return from Folkestone to Dunkirk. You should also leave with him all other papers and objects which you do not wish to carry with you.

On arrival at Flushing write a letter to the following address, Monsieur le Lieutenant Colonel A. Attache Militaire auprès de la Legation de France, La Haie, giving.

- a.) The date of your arrival at Flushing.
- b.) The hotel at which you are staying at the Hague.
- c.) Under what name.
- d.) The number of the room.
- e.) The route by which you propose to go from Holland into Belgium. This letter must be signed with your Service number, which is 8 fr. 30, and delivered by hand, not posted.

N. B. on no account attempt to leave the Hague to fulfil your mission until you have had written instructions from a representative of the Military Attache, who will visit you. Failure to observe this instruction may mean your expulsion from Holland.

*Transmission of Information:* When you have information which you wish to send, forward it as quickly as possible to the Military Attache at the Hague indicating anything of urgent importance so that it may be telegraphed.

You should also write to the Attache if you are in need of money. Return to Folkestone when you have completed your mission but try and arrange for enquiries to be continued in Bruges so that we may be kept informed during your absence. Do not return to Folkestone unless you have really urgent information which must be given to me personally.

On arrival in Dunkirk notify your arrival to me through Monsieur Renaudin.

Monsieur Robert then shook me warmly by the hand wished me good luck and advised me to leave as soon as possible.

That very evening before I left on the mission, King Albert arrived incognito in Dunkirk. There were none of the usual marks of a royal visit and the only illuminations at the station was supplied by one small lamp. The King decorated a captain, Chief Inspector Gillemain and the stationmaster and then left as unostentatiously as he had arrived, leaving most of the inhabitants quite unaware that he had been in Dunkirk at all.

### **I leave for Holland.**

The next morning according to instructions I left Dunkirk taking with me my basket of pigeons. I went by train to Boulogne and there embarked for Folkestone. On my arrival at Folkestone a gentleman presented

himself on board and asked if I was not Madame de Beir. He took me immediately to Commander Wallner's house. I left two of my pigeons there because the basket which contained four was too clumsy.

Two days afterwards I received a passport for Holland, and I left by car with some Belgian officers and thus reached a port, the name of which I have forgotten. About ten o'clock at night I went aboard and reserved a first-class cabin. In order not to attract attention I had put the two pigeons in a bag fixed to my belt underneath my skirt. Certain of being alone in my cabin I thought I could free my poor prisoners for a little while: I fed them and they were so happy to be free that they flew continuously from one corner to the other, but they made such a noise that, much to my regret, I was obliged to put them back in their prison.

### **Arrival in Holland.**

The morning after I disembarked at Flushing. I took train at once for the Hague and on my arrival I went immediately to the house of the Military Attache at the French legation in order to get instructions concerning the task I was to attempt in Belgium, and there left a letter containing all the particulars asked for in the paper of directions already referred to.

This was on Sunday, and after leaving the letter I went on to Yzendyke which is situated within 40 minutes walk of the Belgian frontier.

At Yzendyke lived a Madame Christine who, having been brought up with us, we had always considered as our sister. Knowing that I could trust Christine I gave her the two pigeons to keep till my return. I arranged with Christine what she had to do if I sent her by a confidential messenger a note pressed in a pigeon letter case. And in this event she would attach the note to the leg of the pigeon, which would carry the note to its destination.

Christine told me of a certain M. Rondas who lived at Oost Eecloo and whom she thought would be able to help me across the frontier. Returning to Flushing I took the necessary steps to obtain a passport for Bruges from the German Consul on the pretext that I was a refugee and wished to go and live with my daughter at Bruges; but the days passed away and the promised passport was not granted. In the meantime I did not waste time. I took the train at Yzendyke and got out an hour later. Then I entered an inn and over a cup of coffee made the acquaintance of the M. Rondas of whom Christine had spoken. I heard that actually he lived at Oost Eecloo with his mother and sisters but often crossed the frontier. I divulged to him my wish to go to Bruges to see my daughter but he replied that for the moment it was almost impossible to arrange. M. Rondas introduced me later to M. Lietard, an inhabitant of Tourcoing and director of a big manufactory there who also wished to cross the frontier.

Madame Faillie of Bruges had taken refuge at my sister's house. This lady having two sons at the Front I could have confidence in her. Madame Faillie put me in touch with M. Commery of Ghent of the English secret Service. It was M. Commery who advised me to find Arthur B. when I arrived at Bruges. I was to approach this Arthur B. with the pass-word «25,000 francs taken to Holland. »

Still nothing arrived from the passport office and finally I lost patience.

### **Vain attempt to cross the frontier.**

M. Rondas really searched all ways to get us across but all our attempts were doomed with failure. Seeing that there was no other means of crossing M. Lietard, M. Rondas and myself decided to go towards Sas van Gent, where the assistant stationmaster offered to lead us along the permanent way. At the agreed hour, about 11 o'clock at night, we started. After 1½ hour's steady walking an obstacle presented itself in front of us, in the form of a wide ditch full of blackish water. Rondas helped me across while the assistant stationmaster proposed to help M. Lietard.

The latter hurried to accept, but as they were about to jump they lost their foothold and both slipped into the slimy water. Despite their humiliating position we could not resist laughing. But the noise of this fall in



the water had aroused the German outposts, which were only a few yards further, on, and put them on the qui vive. After waiting an hour we realised the impossibility of crossing the frontier, as the posts were properly aroused and standing to arms. Much to our regret therefore we were forced to turn back. I jumped the ditch with the aid of M. Rondas, but a bit further on we found a second ditch in front of us. I jumped, and this time it was I who fell in the very middle. I did not laugh any more because I was soaked to the skin and my clothes, covered with this slimy water, stank abominably. It was about 4 o'clock in the morning when we arrived home at Philippine where M. Lietard lived. In spite of our troubles we were able to divert ourselves during this journey with the complaints of the poor assistant stationmaster. He had set out on the expedition in a white waistcoat and a nice pair of trousers; and you can understand what he looked like after his enforced bath.

### **Arrival in Belgium.**

During the next fortnight we repeated our attempts several times until at last I was successful, thanks to the connivance of some Dutch and German soldiers whose blind eyes were turned by means of 50 francs. I was passed across the frontier at about 7 o'clock at night near Bouchaute. Here I was then at

last on Belgian territory. I had given a letter to M. Rondas to deliver to the French Legation in which I related the difficulties encountered and that I expected at last to be able to cross the same night. Here I was then dressed in peasant's clothes, carrying a bucket in my hand; I had agreed with M. Rondas to go to his house at Oost Eecloo where I was to pass the night. It was pitch dark and raining heavily and although I had asked the way at a farm house near the frontier I was compelled again to ask for directions.

Between ten and eleven o'clock I came to a village which I supposed must be Oost Eecloo. I knocked at several doors but no one would open. The people were not inhospitable but they were too afraid of having German troops billeted on them to open their doors. I had therefore no option but to continue on my way in spite of the heavy rain. It was a very dispiriting start to my mission and it is scarcely surprising that I cried... It was completely dark and really I did not know what to do, I was fairly sure that M. Rondas' house must be in the neighbourhood and naturally I did not wish to adventure further. But it would never do to give up heart like this, what, after all was one night spent in the open when it might have been a hundred times worse? Had I supposed that all would go on wheels? Gradually, by such reasoning I regained some measure of self-control. I sat down in a place more or less sheltered against the rain and hoped no one would see me.



I had no reply ready if I had been discovered by a German and had been asked, where I was wandering to during the night? I therefore sat down quietly and steeled myself to pass the time as patiently as possible. Just before day break a peasant went by and I called out to ask him where M. Rondas' house was. It seemed to me that he looked at me for a long time but he only said: « Follow me at a little distance and I will stop where you wish to go ».

So at last I arrived at M. Rondas' house and only just in time, for I was at the last extremity: The most generous hospitality awaited me and they made me stay in bed all day. Then, completely restored and rested, we talked. I learnt from the Misses Rondas that their mother had been arrested by the Germans and was then in prison. This explained the peasant's reluctance to show me the house.

On the Sunday about 7 o'clock in the morning I left them after thanking them with all my heart for what they had done, and set out on foot towards Bruges by way of Eecloo, Adegem, Maldegem a distance of some thirty-four kilometres. At Bruges the tiresome formalities at the gates had not yet been instituted so that before evening I was safely installed in my sister's house.

### **At Bruges.**

At Bruges I had the luck to find my sister, my brother-

in-law, and my daughter, Ghislaine in good health. After greetings had been exchanged my sister expressed her surprise at my arriving without warning and in such a dress. I replied that I had been forced to disguise myself as a peasant so as not to attract attention seeing that I had arrived without a passport. « What! » said my sister « Without a passport? The house is full of German officers and if one of them sees you it will be quite enough to get us all put in prison. » But I told her not to worry. « I was dying to see you and to kiss Ghislaine and, now I know you are alright, I won't stay long. » The reader will remember that during my stay in Holland, M. Commery of Ghent had advised me to go to Arthur B's house at Bruges. It was Sunday evening when I arrived at my sister's house and I stayed hidden all day on Monday and then as nothing unusual happened to annoy us, I said to my sister that if my arrival had apparently passed unnoticed I would go on into the town. I told her that I would always be very careful when leaving and entering her house. Had my sister or my brother-in-law had any idea of my real mission they would not have sheltered me so I was very careful not to breathe a word to them.

On the Tuesday, therefore, I went out and presented myself at Arthur B's house, where I was admitted almost as soon as the pass-word was past my lips. He gave me information concerning the troops billeted near Lange-marck and Zarren as well as about the gun which was

replacing « Big Bertha ». I told him of my intention to go to Ingelmunster so as to see if I could find out what a number of black dots in the sky were. There were between 400 and 500 balls or ballons seen in this direction. Arthur B. advised me not to go there saying that they were only captive ballons. And when I persisted he said it was a waste of time. « You won't learn anything ». I was forced in the end, to the conclusion that Arthur B. didn't want me to go, though whether he wished to keep the honour of giving this information for himself, or, for what other motive I could not guess. I next went to a certain De Buyser, who kept a cafe in the Rue des Corroyeurs at Bruges. This De Buyser had lived next door to us as a child and we had often played together and as I knew him to be both intelligent and trustworthy, I tried to enlist his help. De Buyser received my proposition very well; his cafe was very popular with the German soldiers and they did not mind saying their impressions out loud concerning the war, and those returned from the front often spoke of their dispositions there. I also arranged with him that in case I should have any very important message, I should write it on my special paper and give it to him. De Buyser would then take it to the girl Rondas, and she would give it to her brother, M. Rondas, who in his turn would take it to Christine's house at Yzendyke.

It was with this intention of course, I had left my pigeons at Christine's house. De Buyser agreed to all this

and assured me, that should the occasion arise, I could count on him. He was a good man. He told me of a certain Desmedt, living at Moerbrugge, quite close to the Dutch frontier, and, of the same type as Desmedt, a certain Ceaseele who lived thereabouts on the Vacke road. This Ceaseele had a secret channel of communication, and De Buyser's information was therefore very valuable and I thanked him heartily.

At Dunkirk, one day I spoke to a Belgian soldier, and when I told him that I expected to go to Bruges soon, he asked me to take some news of him to his wife, a Madame Boels, who was living in the Nouvelle Promenade. I therefore went to this lady's house, and knowing that her husband was at the front, I asked her if she would be willing to help me. I took her good news of her husband so that, although she was very frightened, she promised me her help, and would see what information she could pick up for me on my next visit. For safety's sake we agreed that my visits to her house would be on the pretext of trying on a dress, as she was a dressmaker.

My mission was particularly to get all the information I possibly could about submarines, so I went to the house of Madame de Vooght, a dealer in dairy produce. This lady served my sister, Madame Forrier, for her hotel pension. Because of her trade Madame de Vooght had a passport to go freely everywhere in the vicinity of Bruges. I asked this lady to keep her eyes open,

and keep in mind for me every detail, however uninteresting it might seem to her, especially about the submarines at Bruges. She told me all that she had heard so far, and formally promised to do her best to help me.

Lastly I went to Madame Van Dew. a jeweller on the Grande Place at Bruges. We had always been good friends, and I was able to speak quite openly to her and enlisted her help also. As an excuse for visiting her house, I left a brooch with her for repair. Madame Van Dew. even at night, could watch the road, and thus be able to keep herself informed of the movements of the troops, the arrival of wounded, and any hurried departures. She agreed to take the numbers of the regiments of all the soldiers that she saw in the town and, in brief, she intended to work hard: I could count on her. I also went to other houses where I thought I might pick up information, and, without letting them know what I was after, I encouraged them to speak, and from all sides I collected what I thought might be valuable.

### **Enrolment of my daughter Ghislaine.**

My daughter, Ghislaine now began to complain of my frequent visits to town so, when I was alone with her, I told her that I had joined the Secret Service: I told her all about my attempts at crossing the frontier, and how

much I had taken my work to heart; and she jumped at the chance to help me. German officers were frequently billeted at my sister's hotel then, and she had ample opportunities of overhearing their conversation. I thought this was a very good idea, but warned her to say nothing to her aunt, or to any one else, as I was afraid that in her inexperience she might confide in people who would betray us. Further to impress on her the necessity for secrecy I told her that if we were betrayed it would certainly mean my death, and I privately resolved not to tell her my own plans so that she would be able to plead ignorance of what I was doing.

### **Departure from Bruges for Holland.**

I had now stayed for fifteen days at my sister's house; but before leaving, I called on all my agents, and, furnished with all the information collected, I said « Au Revoir » to my sister and her husband: I kissed my daughter, and reminded her once again of the need for caution.

Outside the Porte Ste Croix, I entered a little house; where a Madame Meulbroeck, a good friend of ours, lived. I disguised myself at her house but told her nothing of my plans beyond that I had to disguise myself as I was without a passport. I told her that I had come to Bruges to see my daughter. I then set out on my return journey. It was night, but this time



I was not afraid. I had to ask my way as it was necessary for me to cross woods and byways, where German soldiers might arrest me. I was conscious of a superhuman force supporting me and, convinced that I was serving a great cause, I was brave and proud to do what I could against my country's enemies.

I therefore walked, not with a trembling step, but firmly, as if I really had nothing to fear. And in this spirit the journey was accomplished, as if by magic and I arrived without once being challenged at the house of the Rondas'. They made me as welcome as before, and I was glad to learn that their mother had been released by the Germans.

I left the Rondas' to go to M. Bouchaute: where I learnt that the German soldier, who had let me pass 15 days ago was in prison for passing another person over the frontier. When this latter was arrested, he had denounced the soldiers who had served him. This struck me as particularly cowardly, and I made a vow never to act in the same way although I did not, of course, expect to be arrested, as I was on my gaurd.

During the next four days I searched all ways and means of crossing into Holland: but in vain. Nothing succeeded. After each attempt I returned to the Rondas' house. The Rondas's eventually sent me to a fishmonger's who lived within two hours of their house. Round about the spot on the frontier, where I hoped to cross, there was a farm where the German patrol on

duty were billeted. The fishmonger was known there and she went to see how the land lay as regards the disposition of the sentries, and to see if the farmer's wife would let me make my next attempt at crossing from the farm. She was successful and I accordingly went to the farm one Sunday morning but had to hang about outside as the soldiers of the patrol were all there. The farm was only separated from the frontier by the road and I saw in the distance the soldiers on duty patrolling the road. This time I did not walk with a firm step; on the contrary I bent myself nearly double and scarcely dared to raise my head. The farmer's wife, thinking I must have arrived, pretended to have some work to do outside the house. I could see her distinctly, looking for me all over the place, though she was careful not to incur suspicion. For a long time I was laying full length in a dry ditch, quite close to her, without daring to make my presence known, only raising my head from time to time to look through the hedge. Eventually I took advantage of some diversion among the soldiers on duty to announce myself to the farmer's wife by a discreet cough. She understood, and came towards me, saying quietly « You must be patient until seven o'clock tonight, nothing can be done with this guard, but with the relief we shall be able to do something ». When I asked if she could hide me anywhere until then, she replied « I am sorry, but it is quite impossible, the



soldiers are in the house and they go all over the place. I dare not risk them finding you under my roof ». She added that my hiding place was well chosen; as the soldiers hardly ever came near the ditch. I said « Very well, I will wait ». These few words were said in a low voice, I, from behind the hedge, and she pretending to gather sticks to explain her presence there. The farmer's wife went away presently and I lay down again in the ditch. It was not yet mid-day so I should be unable to leave my uncomfortable quarters for more than 7 hours, and all this time I should be in immediate danger of capture. It would be enough for a soldier to pass by and ask what I was doing there. What should I be able to say? I had plenty of time to think out an answer but, although I found a good many, not a single one would have reasonably explained my presence there even if I had not had on me written notes of the information I had collected. How I blamed the farmer's wife for not having arranged things more carefully! I did not doubt her good faith or suspect her loyalty, but she did not know in advance which guard would arrive. She might, I thought, at least have hidden me somewhere, I should have been so quiet in the loft: and any place, no matter where, would I thought, have been better than where I was. I turned all these things over in my mind, uselessly enough, but I was fixed, and forced to stay in my ditch until 7 o'clock at night; for it would be foolhardy to retrace my footsteps, and run the risk of

meeting patrols or sentries. I got so cramped that at last I was obliged to stand up to stretch my limbs a bit. I saw nothing suspicious round about the farm. At the slightest noise I sat down again in my ditch. Long as it was, the weary afternoon passed, and I saw the 7 o'clock guard arriving in the distance, and as soon as they were settled the farmer's wife signalled to me. You can imagine my relief; I was literally dead beat and at first I had some difficulty in standing straight on my legs. So, with many precautions, as the relieved guard was still in sight, I went to the farm. The farmer's wife pressed me to partake of some food, but in spite of my hunger, I ate very little; I was in too great a hurry to get over the frontier, so she took me to the soldiers, and by paying 50 frs, I was allowed to pass.

### **In Holland, and then to France.**

What good fortune to arrive at last on Dutch territory! I breathed freely in my peasant's dress. I went quickly to Christine's house and changed my clothes and next morning returned to the Hague. When I took my information to the Military Attache, I was told to take it myself to Dunkirk, and at the same time to receive fresh instructions. At Dunkirk, the Chief of the Secret Service came and shook hands and thanked me in the name of France and Belgium. He inquired about all I had been able to see and hear. I explained how at Bruges I had put out feelers everywhere and that I

expected on my return to find no small amount of more serious information than I had just brought. The chief asked me if I did not find the work too hard but I replied quickly that I would do more if necessary.

« Very well » he said to me « We admire your courage and zeal and are going to take advantage of it because you will leave again almost at once for the same destination ». « Are you ready? ». He was my chief. I had enlisted amongst his personnel and, although I could have refused this new mission, I did not want to. On the contrary the danger I had been through only made me the more reckless and I accepted with much enthusiasm. The chief gave me a new instruction sheet which read as follows.

1. A gun of large calibre (420 or 380) is reported to be erected about 5 kilometres S. W. of Ostende near a place called Hamilton Farm. Try and find the exact position and calibre of this gun.
2. Try and find if recently there have been numbers of Germans wounded in the eyes or even blind, coming from the district to the east of Ypres? (They would have been transported to Ghent, Bruges, Courtrai). If so, try and find out what date these wounded passed through the towns mentioned above, how many there were and some information as to the nature of their wounds, e. g. Were they completely

blind, without any hope of recovery? Or were they expected to recover and how soon?

3. Is there any talk about troops returned or returning from Russia? If so when did they return or when are they expected to return? Forces, arms, numbers of regiments, guns etc.
4. In a general way information about the movements of troops, guns and munitions, which take place by road or railway in the region of Bruges, Ostende, Ghent, Roulers, and the coast from Knocke to Nieuport. State as precisely as possible the date, the direction followed by the troops and the numbers of men. Do not worry about movements which took place more than a month ago but send details by the most rapid means possible of any big movements which you witness or hear of.
5. Get all the information you can about morale, naval matters, aviation, economic position, etc.

After reading this sheet, I told the Chief that I would put my heart and soul into it. He urged me to stay longer in Bruges but at the same time find means of sending on my reports quickly. I then took leave of him, his « Good bye and good luck » ringing in my ears.

So after saying good bye to my friends and a tender farewell to my daughter, Maria, I set out on my

## Second Trip to Belgium.

My journey to Holland this time was quite uneventful and I had just arrived at Yzendijke when I received a formal notice from the German Consul that my passport for Bruges was ready at Flushing, where I could obtain it on payment of ten florins. The passport was in my mother's maiden name of Meulebrouck.

. Thanks to the passport there was no need for me to go on foot to Bruges this time, so I went by train. My sister was astonished at so soon having a second visit from me and just a little alarmed, but I soon set her fears at rest. « I have a passport this time, so there is nothing to worry about ». My sister did not as yet suspect anything and it was safer and kinder to leave her in ignorance.

I now visited in turn all the agents with whom I had made arrangements on my last visit.

Madame Boels, whose upper windows overlooked the railway, was able to give a lot of information about the arrival and departure of troops and munition trains. She also confirmed the report in my instructions about a big gun having passed through Bruges to Ostende. It was a new gun of large calibre but it had been brought back the next day to Bruges and shunted to Knocke for use against Ypres. I made careful notes of all this, of course.

Madame de Vooght had picked up quite a lot of

interesting things in her wanderings in the neighbourhood, while from De Buyser I had the gossip of soldiers returned from the front with many details of the disposition of troops, etc. Madame Van Dew. reported the comings and goings of troops in the town and Ghislaine had made a careful note of the conversation of the German officers staying in my sister's hotel.

So far I had done well, better than I had expected, and I was looking forward to a speedy end to my mission. I was disappointed, however, at my last call, at Arthur B's house. He alone of all my agents had nothing to report he had, he said, seen nothing, heard nothing, and learned nothing. His manner too was far from cordial and I left him vaguely disquieted and full of forebodings.

*To the Frontier with Eugenie.*

### Shall we escape?

When I left my sister's house on the Saturday, delighted with the amount of material collected, I had to pretend that I was going to try and get a letter across the frontier for Joseph and Maria and when my sister saw that I was determined upon it she allowed her servant Eugenie to go with me. I was frankly quite glad to have a companion and we were both soon at Meulenboeck's house near the Porte Ste. Croix where we both disguised ourselves as peasants. Although by now I knew



the way better, we made slow progress, as Eugenie was a slow walker, but eventually we arrived safely at Strooi-brugge. Here I enquired as to the chance of getting into Holland and was told that it was quite useless to try but what could we do? We made up our minds to try and get round by the farm which was only about 20 yards from the bridge. I pushed open the gate of a meadow with the idea of creeping along under the shelter of the hedge but in doing so disturbed some horses which were feeding in the field. They came galloping towards us and we had just time to slam the gate before they got loose. Eugenie, unfortunately, slipped and fell down and the commotion attracted the attention of some soldiers at the farm and three of them came towards us to see what was happening. The soldiers must have seen us, as we were no longer concealed by the hedge and for a moment I had almost lost heart when I saw a clump of mulberry bushes in the hedge. These gave me an idea, and dragging Eugenie with me I strolled, as naturally as I could, towards these bushes and set to work picking the berries, dropping them into a large jar I was carrying. We were, luckily bareheaded and in our peasant dresses and our behaviour apparently satisfied the soldiers that we were quite harmless for they presently turned back and returned to the farm. We went on picking the mulberries for some time however in case they were still watching us. After a little while we turned and strolled back as

naturally as we could until we were far enough away to increase the pace.

By making a wide detour we arrived at Oost Eecloo eventually at about 6 o'clock in the evening. Mlle. Zulma Rondas received us as warmly as she had done on the previous occasion. Mlle. Zulma had obtained a good deal of information at Ghent and I added this at the bottom of one of the sheets I already had in my possession and sealed the lot up in an envelope ready for the messenger. I had scarcely done this when a man entered and, as I thought, looked at me very suspiciously but Zulma reassured me by telling me that he was the messenger who would take the packet to the frontier about midnight and, at the place, arranged with M. Rondas, throw it across to him. Rondas would then take it to the Snutsplein at the Hague.

### **Back to Bruges.**

As it was fairly late when we reached M. Rondas' house and we were both tired out, we were very grateful for the shelter Mlle. Zulma so kindly offered us for the night.

The next day we stayed talking with our hosts until so late that when at last we set out for Bruges again I soon realised that we should not arrive at the Porte Ste. Croix until after curfew. (The Germans had recently ordered all civilians to be indoors before a certain time). As it would only be looking for trouble

to try and pass the sentries after this time, I asked Eugenie if she did not know of anyone in the neighbourhood who would take us in for the night, she said that although she knew plenty of people, the consequence of sheltering anybody without leave from the Commandant of the Town were so harsh, that they would be too terrified to take us in. However we were still outside the gates and at last, after further promptings on my part, she said that there was a hut a little further on made from a derelict tram car where we might be able to make shift for the night. We set out for this hut but had hardly got into our stride when there was a noise behind us which we thought at first must be from aircraft and so kept on until it became obvious that it came from motor cars and, moreover, motors coming in our direction. What were we to do? Where were we to hide? Eugenie was trembling all over and probably wishing she had never seen me. I too would have much preferred to be alone. I tried to urge her to run to a thicket I saw, or thought I saw, a little way from the road, but she seemed paralysed with fright and couldn't move a step, and the cars were getting nearer every minute. There was nothing for it but to lie down by the roadside and trust to luck. I pushed Eugenie down and lay down myself, and only just in time — a fleet of about thirty cars tore past us at high speed and, our luck was in, for no one had noticed us.

When I got Eugenie to her feet she was loud in her protestations that never again would she venture on such a mission. I told her not to worry, there would be no need. « I shall not want to get a letter to my son every day ». She was obviously quite useless for a venture which required coolness in emergencies and ready resource but I did not want to hurt her feelings so kept up the story of the reason for our journey. Secret service work was certainly not all roses.

I had other things to occupy my mind with too, when we arrived at the hut. Eugenie squatted in a corner and dozed off to sleep but my mind kept coming back to the man to whom my precious letter had been entrusted at the Rondas' house. True Mlle. Rondas had vouched for him but I could not put out of my head the thought of how strangely he had looked at us. And so the weary night dragged through, until at 6 o'clock, we set out again and made our way to the Meulenbroeck's house where hot coffee made us forget momentarily of many of our sorrows, and where we could wait in comfort the opening of the Gate and get into the town without a passport.

### **At Bruges.**

My sister and brother-in-law, M. Forrier, were still quite ignorant of the real reason for my journey. They believed implicitly that it had been no more than to

secure the despatch of a letter to my son Joseph. Ghislaine received me so joyfully that I suspected she had news of more than usual interest to pass on and, as soon as we were alone, I found this was indeed the case for she burst out with, « Mother, I've found a wonderful source of information. You know, room 5 here, well, it is now occupied by a German engineer officer who is so simple and unsuspecting he generally leaves his door open and I have seen plans and maps spread out on the table in his room. Yesterday I waited until he had left the house and the coast was clear as regards the other officers, and then stole in and looked at the plans. One was a map of the Nieuport district, with the positions of all the guns, etc. marked on it ».

What a stroke of luck! The plan must be copied of course, so the next morning while I kept watch, Ghislaine again entered the room but alas, the plan had gone! She searched all the drawers and the trunk which was under the bed and unlocked it but no plan, and she was just leaving the room in despair after effacing as far as possible all trace of her visit when she saw an old military greatcoat hanging behind the door. With her heart in her mouth she felt in the pockets and there it was, folded up and thrust into the breast pocket. She rejoined me on the landing and we hurried together to her room, bolted the door securely and spread out the plan on the table. What a find! Every gun was marked with its range, and even

such details as the shelters for the guns crews were indicated. Ghislaine had luckily a blue pencil and I had brought tracing paper and we set to work to copy the plan at top speed. Much of it we did not understand ourselves but we left nothing out; keener brains than ours would know what use to make of it.

Our luck held and the plan was presently back again in the overcoat pocket, but still Ghislaine was not satisfied. She had noticed other papers in the trunk whilst searching for the plan and nothing would satisfy her but that we must go through these also. It was a very mixed bag, letters and photos, etc, these last of a typical German family group; an unfinished plan and a lot of notes. We both set to work on these last and copied them out as hurriedly as we could, but now we seemed to have tempted Providence too far. Ghislaine went back to Room 5 to return the notes and found the door shut — the door which we had left wide open. Had the engineer returned or was it just his batman who had come to tidy the room? There was nothing for it but to hide the envelope and trust to luck to enable us to return it before the loss was discovered. When we got downstairs we found that it was the engineer himself who had come back. I took the envelope from Ghislaine as I was determined that suspicion should not fall on her if the papers were missed. The engineer's door remained closed all the afternoon and evening and there was, therefore, no chance, of slip-



ping the envelope back but, to allay Ghislaine's growing fears, I was forced to say I had done so. Many times during the next day I tried to get into the room, but there was always someone about although the engineer himself was out but at long last the precious envelope was replaced whilst the officers were at dinner and I could breathe again.

### **« One over the eight. »**

Our success with the engineer made us bold and we were not long in trying similar tactics with the other officers. We found very little, it is true, but we copied it all out very diligently and hoped for more. One of these officers — a submarine officer — was very fond of boasting of the German Navy and its excellencies when he had been drinking. On these occasions he used to inflict his company on my sister and her husband and who ever else he could get to listen to him, and one evening he came in the room where we were all together, flung himself into an armchair and began to hold forth on his favourite theme. He had evidently already had more than was good for him but, at a sign from me, Ghislaine poured him out a stiff drink whilst I worked on his vanity by saying that men of genius were still needed to perfect submarines. He rose to the bait and was soon deep in technicalities. We had been playing cards when he came in and the scoring pencils

and paper were still on the table. This gave me an idea and I insinuated as cleverly as I could that it was very difficult for ignorant people to follow his meaning without a picture or drawing. At the same time I set the pencil rolling in his direction. He picked it up and drew a submarine plan pointing out the vulnerable points and also indicating how mines were laid from submarines.

This was more than I had dared hope for and I got up, stifling a yawn, and said good night. He also staggered to his feet and went to his room. Directly I heard his door close behind him I ran back into the sitting room and seized the paper with the drawings. My sister and her husband asked what I wanted it for and I said. « Oh: just out of curiosity and anyhow best not leave this about as he would get into trouble if it were found by one of the other officers ».

This seemed to satisfy my sister who naturally was somewhat timid and overawed by what she had heard as to the fate of those who had fallen under German suspicion.

This addititon to our « log » seemed important enough to justify another trip to the frontier. So the next day I went the round of all my agents and got matter of varying importance from all but Arthur B. Here my reception was as disturbing as last time; he professed to know nothing, to have heard nothing, and to have seen nothing. All he asked was if I knew of a

youth of about 18 from the Rue des Carmes who was also engaged in spying. I said that I did not but as I lived in that neighbourhood before my marriage and knew it intimately I could soon find out. This, however, he kept on insisting would not do and I left him in the end with the growing conviction that he had something up his sleeve and that something boded no good for me.

### **The Frontier Again.**

#### **The Rondas' Family Arrested.**

When I set out on the Monday morning my sister was most emphatic in her advice to me to remain safely at Dunkirk, « If you keep coming and going like this you are sure to be noticed and I should be much happier if you keep away from here until the war is over ».

I reassured her as well as I could, leading her to suppose that I should follow her advice, although I knew very well I should have to come back again, but Ghislaine would be on the spot and would let me into the house secretly if it were necessary, so there was no need to worry my sister.

I made the journey in good time and was just walking unconcernedly right up to the Rondas' house when a woman accosted me with, « Don't go there, don't you know they've all been arrested. The Ger-

mans are still searching the house and its surroundings ».

It was a bad moment for me, a cold shiver went down my back and my mouth went all dry. I felt certain they had been betrayed by the messenger they had trusted so much. I shivered again when I remembered how closely he had inspected me.

I pulled myself together and asked the woman why they had been arrested and if anything incriminating had been found. I was thinking of my own notes, of course, but apparently Mlle. Zulma had found means of passing them on, as the woman assured me, much to my relief, that she thought nothing had been found up to then.

If my surmise was correct as to the informer my own position wasn't an enviable one. The traitor would certainly have denounced me also and here I was within a few yards of the Rondas' house! But, thanks to this kindly neighbour, I was still at liberty and picking up my skirts I ran off as fast as I could go, intent only on getting as far away from the neighbourhood as I could.

As I ran, my mind was filled with bitterness against the traitor who had deprived my friends of their liberty and me of a haven where I was always sure of shelter and a welcome.

I heard long afterwards, when I was myself a prisoner, that the Rondas' family had been questioned

about me again and again but, however much they were pressed, they had always denied all knowledge of me and my doings.

### **A new messenger?**

I was so taken up at first with the pressing necessity for getting as far as possible from the Rondas' house that I hadn't considered where I was to go. It was very clear I could not stay in that neighbourhood, at any rate until I knew whether or not I was «marked» by the Germans. I was now walking more slowly as, if I had continued to run, it would have attracted attention and as I walked I turned things over in my mind. All sorts of schemes, most of them wild and impracticable passed through my mind and then at last I remembered De Buyser, the café proprietor at Bruges, speaking of a certain Desmedt and another man named Caeseele. I had asked Rondas' about these man and he had indicated roughly where Caeseele lived and said that they were both trustworthy people who had done a lot of letter smuggling across the frontier. This recollection put new heart into me, I enquired the way and eventually arrived at Caeseele's house in the small hours of the morning. I knocked them up and told them what had happened to the Rondas', they made me welcome and I soon explained the object of my visit.

It appeared that there was a regular traffic in young men wishing to cross the frontier and by awaiting favourable opportunity Caeseele had generally succeeded in getting them across safely. One young man, however, the previous day got impatient and had gone off to try to cross on his own. He paid with his life for his rashness for he was electrocuted trying to pass through the heavily charged frontier fence.

I gave Caeseele 50 frs. and a plan showing where the packet was to be taken. This plan was drawn so as to convey no meaning without the verbal explanation which accompanied it. This plan and the money Caeseele passed on to a young man named Geldof who was his understudy in many of the trips. The verbal directions were, « Take a N° 1 tram when you leave the train and get out at the Snuitsplein. Go to the last house on the left and up to the first floor. Don't knock but go right in at the first door on the left and give the envelope to the gentleman you will find always there. There is no need to say anything at all, unless you need more money. In this case you should ask the gentleman for it.

I stayed at Caeseele's house for the rest of the day and the next morning, much refreshed and relieved, set out for Bruges once more.



## Bruges Again.

My sister was surprised and none too pleased to see me again but I explained about the Rondas' family and that I had counted on their help in getting across the frontier.

The news of this arrest aroused all my sister's fears and she kept moaning that it would be our turn next. She said my comings and goings had already excited comment. I let her talk herself to a standstill. I knew her heart was in the right place and when she stopped for breath I said I was sure to be able to get away the next week and would not come back again. I then made another round of visits and collected the usual mixed mass of information. Last of all I called at Arthur B's house where I was told he was out. I was left standing in the hall, where I said I would wait. Presently a German officer entered and went upstairs. He was probably billeted in the house, but I was taking no unnecessary risks and turning my back, pretended to be very interested in an engraving hanging on the wall. The officer returned in a few minutes and cast a sharp glance at me as he passed out into the street. I waited what seemed a very long time before Arthur B. came in and then he took me into his room but only to say that I must discontinue my visits as he was watched and was afraid of being compromised. I left the house more than ever convinced that he was playing a double game.

I went to Caeseele's house with my notes next day without telling my sister and found that he had been unable as yet to get the other packet away but hoped to do so to-morrow and would take the new packet with it. As I had not told my sister I had been towards the frontier, I had perforce to dissemble my weariness when I got back but — I needed no rocking to sleep that night.

### **A New Character Enters.**

On Sunday a young man about 18 years of age called at my sister's house and asked for me. Fortunately my sister was out at the time. He told me he had been sent by Caeseele but I knew he must be lying because Caeseele did not know where I was staying and as he could neither read nor write would not have been able to make anything out on this score even if he had looked through the papers I had left with him.

I decided at once to let him talk away, hoping to glean something from his conversation but I privately resolved that he would get nothing out of me.

He must have seen that he hadn't impressed me for he became very confidential and said he had been chased by German soldiers while trying to get across the frontier on an errand for Caeseele and for the last four days and nights he had not dared to go to his home in Bruges.

I pretended not to know anyone of the name of Caeseele and said I didn't know what he was talking about. He then put on a very melodramatic air and whispered in my ear, «Madame, you can trust me absolutely, besides I live next door to your parents', old house, and I should have thought you would have remembered me».

I began to see daylight! This then was the young man Arthur B. had asked me about; no wonder he wanted to know if I knew him !

I kept control of my features, however and he went on to say he had worked with Caeseele for more than a year and said he had been sent to tell me that the man Geldof was no longer working with Caeseele and the latter had sent him to me in Geldof's place. «You see, Madame, I know all about you. You have taken a packet to Caeseele's house but he has not yet been able to send it off and if you care to come with me tomorrow we will pick it up at Caeseele's and I'll help you myself to pass through the wires. I can't do more than that can I? »

I thought it best to agree; I was not satisfied about my two letters and I was naturally annoyed with Caeseele for talking about them in this careless way.

As this fellow said he had nowhere to go for the night, I said if he came to the tradesman's entrance at about eight o'clock I would look out for him and smuggle him into one of my sister's spare rooms and

as there were more than 25 German officers in the house no one would think of looking for him there. I kept a sharp look out for him until late that night but he did not turn up and he wasn't at the agreed rendez-vous the next morning and all my old suspicions returned in force. However, in the afternoon, I was walking with my sister near the station when I saw him talking with another man. He immediately left this man and came sidling up to me and whispered that he hadn't been able to keep the appointment but would be outside the Porte Ste. Croix without fail at 7 o'clock next morning.

I was at the appointed place well before time and this time he did come just as the clocks were striking the hour. He had kept the appointment but he was not alone but accompanied by another man. This man went on ahead while we followed together, but when I wanted to turn off and follow my usual short cut, he pretended he had something to do on the main road. Presently he turned off into a side road and went into a house, through the open door of which I saw two women give him a packet. My companion rejoined me and, apparently liking the sound of his own voice, began to tell me a long story about himself. He said his name was Leon R. and that his wife had managed to escape to England where he wanted to join her. « Your wife? » I said, « but you are only a boy ». He seemed a little taken back and

replied that he was much older than he looked. He went on to say that he had worked for a long time for the German Commandant and had picked up a little German there and so was not frightened when he met anyone as he could always make himself understood. He said he was also working with English Secret Service agents, but despite all this I still didn't feel at all easy about him and, had he not spoken again about my notes, I should have turned back and left him.

He seemed altogether too talkative for a spy. I had said nothing at all about my work, while he had told me all his plans. All the same I couldn't get over the fact that he knew about the notes I had given to Caeseele, and I thought I should soon get information about him from Caeseele himself.

We came presently to a place where the road forked: I wanted to follow the one which I knew was the quieter, and where we should be less liable to observation, but Leon R. insisted on our going the more frequented road as he said it was a fatal thing to appear to be hiding, or have anything to conceal from the Germans. In the end he had his way and we followed the main road, although it added more than half an hour to the journey. Just before we came to the place where the road to Vacke branched off, there was a group of houses. Leon R. and his friend went into the first of these, whilst I strolled on, but not

before I had seen a corner of the window curtain lifted. Was this the simple country household it seemed, or were they watching me with more than ordinary curiosity?

When the two men rejoined me on the road a few minutes later they did not vouchsafe any explanation as to why they had entered the house and although my curiosity was naturally aroused, I thought it best to say nothing.

A little while after, we arrived at Caeseele's house but instead of entering with us, Leon R's companion went on without saying even « Good night ». I have never to this day found out his name or learned any more about him.

Madame Caeseele said her husband was out but was expected back at any moment and, on hearing this. Leon R. went for a walk in the yard while I hurriedly asked Madame Caeseele if her husband was expecting to cross the frontier, and if my papers had yet reached their destination or were still in the house, as Leon R. had said. I asked too about Leon R. himself. Why had her husband confided in him, and was the man to be trusted? She answered that she was sure that her husband had said nothing about the notes, he was far too cautious, but as Geldof always went with him to the frontier she supposed it must have been from Geldof that Leon R. had learned of them. Geldof was straight



enough but a bit of a 'gossip' and Caeseele had had to speak to him more than once about talking so freely.

While we were still talking Caeseele himself came in and I told him how disappointed I was to hear that my notes had not yet gone and asked when he expected to take them. He replied that the frontier guards had been increased and it was almost impossible for the moment to get across.

While Leon R. was still outside I gave Caeseele some insulated wire cutters which had been given to me in Bruges, without saying where I got them from.

Caeseele was just talking to me about Leon R. when there was a commotion at the door and three German soldiers came into the room. Our faces must have shown traces of the fright their appearance caused us for one of them burst out with, « Don't be frightened, Madam, we have only come to ask M. Caeseele to help us get away into Holland; we've had enough of the war ».

After a lot of talking we felt they were really sincere and after Mme. Caeseele had given them a meal her husband said he would tell them the best place to make the attempt. He also gave them a piece of wood, cut in the shape of a half moon and covered with rubber with which they could lift the electric wires in order to pass beneath them. After the soldiers had gone off, Caeseele and I decided to try and cross ourselves during the night. The Germans

had blown up Leegskensbrugge bridge and withdrawn the guard formerly mounted there. The wreckage of the bridge was still, however, half in and half out of the water and the three soldiers were still hanging about trying to make their way across. We all made the passage eventually, clinging together in case one should lose his foothold on the slippery debris and break a leg. It was a nightmare journey but at length we all stood on the other side, wet and cold. Caesele commanded the strictest silence and we continued in Indian file the last stage of the journey. Presently we came to a hedge enclosing a triangular piece of ground and there a halt was called while Caesele gave his final instructions. We could see the frontier fence quite clearly through the hedge and we were bidden crawl up to the fence on all fours. It was a terrifying experience — that slow crawl through the dark. We could hear the soldiers at the frontier post quite clearly, and it seemed inevitable that they must hear us too, for go as carefully as we could, we couldn't help but make some little noise. My nerves were so much on edge that I nearly jumped up when Leon R. began to talk. Three times I had to hiss, «Shut up» in his ear before he would stop talking.

In addition to all my own notes, I had taken charge of the packet of letters Caesele had collected from various people for delivery in Holland, as he had charged himself with manipulating the electric wires in the fence.

## Betrayed.

The arrangements whispered at the hedge had been for Caeseele and one of the soldiers to lift up the wires with one of Caeseele's arches. I was then to pass through first, followed by the three soldiers. Leon R. was to come next, and lastly Caeseele himself if possible. If Caeseele did not succeed I was to deliver his packet of letters to their destination.

Everything went according to plan, we got to the fence, Caeseele and the soldiers lifted the wires and I lay down flat ready to crawl under. I pictured myself already in Dutch territory. I started to crawl and at that moment Leon R. let out a great yell!!!

I collapsed, almost paralysed with fright. The others started up and bolted away leaving me on the ground, too terrified to move; 'sauve qui peut' was the order of the day. There was a commotion from the guard, orders were shouted and soldiers with lamps came running towards me. The sight of the on-coming lights restored me to my senses and I started to crawl away. I had lost all sense of direction and was filled simply with an intense desire to get as far from the fence as possible. Presently I came to a shallow ditch into which I crept and lay full length, peeping up to watch as the lights bobbed up and down as the Germans searched along the wires. I could feel the packet of papers in my pocket and had my wits

been about me I suppose I could quite easily have thrown them away or hidden them. Presently, to add to my terror, the lights began to move towards where I was lying. «God help me! My poor children!» I pulled myself together and raising my head saw a hedge on the other side of the ditch. I had been too frightened to notice this before, but now I recognised it as part of the hedge bordering the triangular plot of ground. I could see the lanterns through the hedge as the soldiers searched the other two sides of the triangle. They were obviously going all round the hedge and it was only a matter of moments before they would see me... So this was the end... failure within 20 paces of the frontier! It is impossible to describe my state of mind. I pulled out the compromising packets and held them in hands clammy with the sweat of fear.

### Saved.

It seemed an eternity, lying there at the bottom of the ditch expecting every second the soldiers' shout of discovery. Why didn't they come? Perhaps they had seen me already and were playing with me as a cat with a mouse; but, no, they turned back at the corner of the hedge. It seemed too good to be true, but their footsteps were certainly becoming more and more indistinct. They had tired of the search

and were going back to the guard house. I lay like a log for some time, all the same, before I ventured to raise my head and look. When at length I peeped through the hedge the soldiers had completely vanished. A miracle had taken place and I was free. The relief was so great that I could only kneel there in the ditch while my lips framed the most heartfelt prayer of my life. «Thank God, Thank God».

Presently, prudence urged a move, in case the soldiers should return, so, still crawling, I made my way painfully enough until I thought it was safe to risk standing up. Though I strained my eyes and ears in the darkness I could neither see nor hear anything suspicious and it seemed the others must have made good their escape too. What to do next? Should I go back to Caeseele's house? But Leon R. would have told the Germans everything by now. It was a horrible predicament, but, it was necessary to do something; I couldn't stay where I was. I looked around trying to locate my position and then set off cautiously in what I thought must be the general direction of the hedge. I had gone some little way when I heard the sound of voices just ahead and thought I saw the outline of a group of men. So? I wasn't yet out of the wood! This must be another search party from the guard house, I thought, and I hurriedly looked about for a new hiding place. Just then one of the men raised his voice a little and, to

my joy, I recognised it as Caeseele's. I then threw caution to the wind and hurried up to the group. It was Caeseele and the three German soldiers. We all shook hands heartily and although they said nothing I could see they had been worrying over my fate. Leon R. had obviously given the alarm with his cry and brought the guard out on us, but where was he now? Almost certainly with the Boches but his scheme had failed this time at any rate.

### **We Try Again.**

Caeseele thought we should return to his house and, as no better plan suggested itself, we started back. We had only gone a little way when Leon R. came running up to us and professed to be overjoyed at our escape. The others seemed to accept him quite naturally but his barefaced effrontery was too much for me and I burst out angerily that it wasn't his fault we were not all prisoners. He was rather taken back and could only stammer that he had been so overcome with fright that he didn't know what he was doing. I was going to give him a bit of my tongue when I caught a signal from Caeseele, who was behind Leon R. to keep quiet and he presently whispered, «Pretend to believe him, we'll attend to him later».

It was nearly 4 o'clock before we got back to Caeseele's house and we were all so exhausted that we left off



making further plans for the moment and rested until 8 o'clock. After this brief respite we had a council of war in the kitchen and agreed heartily with Caeseele that there was no chance now of getting across the frontier. On hearing this decision. Leon R. departed and directly his back was turned the long pent up question poured out, « Had he squeaked? » None of us trusted him enough to suggest making new plans in his presence. We all thought the Germans would expect us to be too scared to make any fresh attempt for some time at any rate. We, therefore, decided on a bold move. We would try again the next night. Caeseele found a hiding place for the three German soldiers in the attic of the house where they were told to lie 'doggo' until we were ready to start. I myself kept Madame Caeseele company. During the afternoon two young men, one of whom was a hunchback, came to the house and asked Caeseele if he would help them to cross the frontier. I signalled to Caeseele warning him to be careful, but he replied that there was nothing to worry about. I had, however had more than enough of these unknown men and practically made up my mind to drop out of the party. Caeseele himself could not quite make up his mind what to do. We were already five wanting to cross and prudence advised no further additions to the party. « Besides, » he said to the hunchback, « in case of an alarm you would not even be able

to run away». The hunchback replied that he could run like a hare and would, moreover pay Caeseele 20 francs for his help. This seemed to decide Caeseele, for he said he would take them if they would come to the house at 11 o'clock the next night. It was only just after 10 o'clock, however, when the hunchback and his companion turned up. Caeseele had just gone out to see how the land lay; when he came back a little later, it was in no very good spirits. The Germans were very much on the alert, and he had learned from a friend that the guards had been doubled, doubtless because of the previous night's alarm. «Patience», he said, «we'll try again tomorrow.» The hunchback and his companion went away promising to return the next night at the same time. The three German soldiers and I naturally stayed on in Caeseele's house. During the night we heard the sound of several shots.

Next morning I tried to find out from Mme. Caeseele if she knew of anyone else in the neighbourhood who was engaged in smuggling letters, but, although I pressed her, she insisted that she knew no one.

The idea was beginning to grow in my mind that I must find another outlet somehow for what use was the information obtained with so much trouble unless we could get it into the right hands? Not one of the notes taken to Caeseele had as yet got any further. My own unaided efforts had actually been more suc-

cessful. It is true that but for Leon R's treachery yesterday we should have succeeded in crossing, and I should have already been in France with my precious notes.

In the afternoon, to my great astonishment, my nephew Albert came to the house. My sister had sent him to see if I were still in the neighbourhood, or had escaped. Ghislaine had told him to ask for information at Caeseele's house. He said my sister was very worried about me, and urged me to get into Holland as soon as possible, and stay there. I told Albert he could reassure my sister as we were hoping to get across the following night. I took care to say nothing about our unsuccessful attempt two nights before. After the war I learnt that a German officer had been at my sister's house inquiring about me, which, of course, explained her fears for my safety and her sending Albert on his present mission. She had made Albert promise not to tell me about the visits of this officer, but simply to say that Bruges was more crowded with troops than ever, and if I went back there I should almost certainly be arrested. I renewed my assurances and he went back home apparently quite satisfied.

Caeseele went out again in the evening to see how the land lay, but he soon came back saying that Leon R. must have betrayed us. Soldiers were all over the place and we should have no chance of getting away. A search of the house was so likely that he

advised the three Germans to escape while the going was good. He went out and showed them what he thought was the safest way. He told them to try and bribe one of the sentries, as they would probably not succeed any other way. Caesele came back looking very worried. All his courage seemed to have evaporated, and, truth to tell there was plenty to worry about; it would be difficult to imagine a more desperate situation.

I tried to hearten him by suggesting that we should get right away and make our attempts at another end of the frontier where there were fewer sentries. I reminded him that with but two of us there was now no fear of betrayal. I told him my notes were of the utmost importance and should have been in France long ago. I really think I had almost persuaded him until I mentioned the notes but, alas, this remark brought all his fears back again and he definitely refused to do anything. He told me I had better give him the notes to hide, as he was expecting a search party almost any minute and it would be fatal if they were found on anyone. I accordingly gave him the packet and he went and put it in a hiding place in the yard with the other letters he hadn't been able to send off.

## Arrested!

When Caeseele returned from hiding my notes in the yard we separated for the night, but, in spite of the weariness both of mind and body occasioned by all the upset and alarms of the last two nights, I found it quite impossible to sleep.

I had made up my mind to depart on the morrow but, before I left Caeseele, I urged him to take the first opportunity to send on my notes; it would really be a great loss if they did not reach their destination. He promised to do his best and I knew he was faithful and honest and would not betray me.

This was on Friday and I said I would come back on the Monday in the hope of better news. In no very joyous mood, then, I set out once more for Bruges. In spite of my almost miraculous escape at the frontier, I had failed most dismally in my attempts either to cross myself or forward my notes. Oh, if only I could make the acquaintance of another Caeseele, like him, honest and faithful, but a little less timorous! But there seemed little hope of finding the nest of this rare bird.

How would my sister receive me? I knew very well she must have had good cause for alarm seeing that she had sent Albert to Caeseele's house: but where else could I go? In the end I made up my mind to hang about outside the house in the hope that Ghislaine

would come out and be able to smuggle me in without her aunt knowing. It was only to be for the week — end.

Once I had made this decision a little of my failing spirits came back to me. I was under no illusions as to what my fate would have been had providence been less kind to me at the frontier — prison and death would be the only fate of anyone caught red handed with such incriminating papers in their possession. But recollection of this peril brought also remembrance of my great deliverance, and I read into this a bright omen that I was still to be of service to my country. I there and then resolved that if Caeseele had not succeeded on the Monday I would take the notes away and try myself at the same place where I had passed the soldiers once before by bribery. There must be no more delay.

In spite of the distance, I was so immersed in my meditations that I was quite surprised to find myself outside the Porte Ste. Croix.

Now, to get into touch with Ghislaine! I should learn from her what was afoot and what occasion there really was for alarm. All being well she could get me into the house and I promised myself a good sleep whilst Ghislaine visited the agents to see if there were any more news.

I had been walking for some ten minutes now, and just as I came up to the Army Forage Stores, a car passed me on the road, going towards the Porte Ste.



Croix. The noise of the car roused me from my musings and I turned mechanically to see who was in it, but almost at the same moment the chauffeur turned the car and came back towards me. I thought at first they had come the wrong way, but I soon found out my mistake for, directly the car got up to me, it stopped and one of the officers in it harshly ordered me to get in. When I managed to stammer out « What for? » he told me not to ask questions but to do as I was told and at once. Trembling all over, I got into the car and sat down. So I was under arrest! This was on the 18th October, 1915.

### **Prison.**

When we got to the Porte Ste Croix one of the officers leaned out and said to the sentry, ! Wir haben schon diese frau ». (We've got that woman already).

This short sentence was a whole world of explanation to me. The sole object of the motor journey must have been to arrest a woman and a woman whose description was so minutely known to them that I had been recognised at once from a moving car.

If I had been stopped on the road, and being unable to produce a passport, had been arrested as a suspicious character, that would have been natural enough, but one of the officers silently produced a

paper. It was a warrant for my arrest.

To be caught at the frontier with incriminating papers on one would have occasioned no surprise but to be arrested at sight like this could only mean that I had been betrayed by someone who knew me well.

Who was the traitor?

When we got to the military hospital the car stopped and I was told to get out and was hustled into an office where I was asked if I had any papers on me. I immediately handed over two letters addressed to people in Bruges. Caesele had asked me to take these letters which had come from soldiers at the front and had no relation to spying. The officers read the two letters but apparently didn't find them very entertaining and when I insisted that I had no other papers they searched me very thoroughly but of course found nothing as Caesele had hidden my notes.

From the hospital I was taken to the Commander's office where I was again questioned at length by different people. They had not believed what I told them, to explain further, they took my bag, from me which however contained besides some money nothing more incriminating than the pencil stub with which I had written down at Rondas' and Caesele's houses, the information collected en route there.

I was then taken to a dark and indescribably filthy

The map illustrates the geographical context of the events described in the text. It shows the location of Bruges and its suburb Ste Croix, where the French secret service was active. The map also depicts the surrounding regions of Holland and France, and the English Channel.

This plan shows the roads travelled on foot by Mme de Beir when in the French secret service.

**Ste Croix** a suburb of Bruges where  
**Mme de Beir** was arrested.

x



cell, the only furniture of which was a rough bench. To reach this cell from the room where I had been questioned it was necessary for me to cross the yard where a woman with a strangely familiar face was selling odds and ends to the lounging German soldiers. I couldn't place this woman at once, although it was quite obvious from the start she gave that she had recognised me, but when I was left alone in the cell I remembered that she was a frequent caller at my sister's house.

I knew it would be but a short time before my sister knew of my fate.

I was locked up in this cell for three seemingly interminable days.

### **A Warrant for Ghislaine.**

I was quite right in thinking that the hawker would soon spread the news of my arrest. She went straight to my sister's house and burst in on them while they were at supper. My sister and brother-in-law were not greatly alarmed, as they knew nothing of my secret service activities, but Ghislaine was terrified.

When she had recovered from the first shock of the news she went upstairs to my room and collecting everything she could find of mine made a bonfire of them in the kitchen. It was a fortunate thing she did this, as I had carelessly left about not only odds and

ends of clothing with my name marked in them but also a card with my Secret Service number 8F30 on it. From the wardrobe downstairs she took the hat, which in my absence, she had worn on her expeditions to collect information and threw this also into the fire together with some books of M. Forrier's in which she had made some notes. When everything connecting me with the house was thus in ashes she broke down and had a good cry.

My sister and brother-in-law who were present at this auto-da-fe were frankly puzzled on seeing Ghislaine destroying some of her own clothes and pressed her to tell them what it all meant and in the end she gave way and told them the whole story.

Then indeed they were able to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Early the next morning, Ghislaine had hardly finished when there was a knock at her door and two German soldiers entered; « Fraulein de Beir? » Mme Forrier had followed them upstairs and they explained the reason for their visit. Ghislaine no sooner heard that she was herself under arrest than she collapsed full length on the floor. They picked her up and thinking it was just a fainting fit waited for her to come round but as she showed no signs of returning to consciousness my brother-in-law hurried off to fetch Dr. de Vos. When the doctor arrived he cleared the soldiers out of the room while he made his examination and presently declared that Ghislaine couldn't possibly be moved.



The soldiers, not unnaturally perhaps, suspected a ruse and at first refused to go without their prisoner but the doctor was very firm and at last they went away. When they came back next day, they forced their way upstairs and said their orders were to take her with them whatever her condition. The doctor was luckily in the house at the time and was able to persuade them to go fetch their own military doctor who by a lucky chance he happened to know.

When the soldiers returned with the German doctor he confirmed Dr. de Vos' diagnosis and sent the soldiers away with a note certifying that Ghislaine wasn't fit to be moved.

These two doctors laboured strenuously during the next three days to save Ghislaine's life but it was a long time before she was pronounced out of danger.

### **My Sister's Arrest.**

I can fully appreciate the sufferings of my sister and brother-in-law while this was going on but they were not yet out of the wood.

Mme. Forrier stayed by Ghislaine's bedside all that night. She and her husband were both devoted to Ghislaine and had always treated her as their own child and they were nearly prostrated themselves at this double blow. The two soldiers returned the next morning and in reply to my sister's query, «What do you want?»

They replied we have come to arrest you.

« I ? » said Mme Forrier « but what have I done and who will look after this poor girl while I am away ? » But the soldiers were not to be put off this time and my sister had time only to put on her hat and coat before they marched her off between them to the Commander's office.

My poor sister was quite at a loss to understand what all this meant and was distracted at having to leave Ghislaine in such a state but what could she do. Soon, in her turn, she was lodged in one of the Commander's cells. As it happened we were in adjoining cells though neither of us knew this.

She was almost immediately subjected to a close cross-examination about my visits to her house but all they were able to get from her was a repeated statement that she knew nothing about my doings. She stuck to this during successive examinations the following days. She had been in her cell for about a week when a soldier happened to be passing and recognised her. He had often been to the house on errands in connection with the officers billeted there so my sister was encouraged to confide in him and explained her position. She told him that I had been arrested but for what reason she did not know as I had never told her about my plans. She finished by appealing to him to see if he could interest somebody in authority in her case — she was obviously ill

and wanted to go home. — What steps he took and whom he interested in her behalf we never knew but he certainly kept his promise to do what he could for she was released that same day.

When she got back home she found Ghislaine still very ill and her husband very worried and preoccupied.

My sister's connection with one suspected of spying naturally enough, laid her open to a good deal of annoyance not the least of which was the peremptory demand of the authorities that she should leave her house and find other quarters in which to live. She and her husband had to leave their boarding-house with little more than they stood up in. They found a place in the Quai des Teinturiers but were not allowed to remain there very long before they were again turned out and had to seek refuge in the Rue des Corroyeurs. In these two moves they lost nearly all their worldly possessions.

### **The Pencil.**

While these things were going on, I was left to my own reflections in my gloomy cell. I reviewed the position over and over again and found very little cause for cheerfulness. After I had been three days in my cell, I was marched between two soldiers to an office to be questioned.

The last two lots of notes I had given to Caeseele had been written in ink with additions at the foot made with the piece of pencil already referred to. These notes had been hidden with the others by Caeseele in his yard.

I was not surprised to see this pencil stub on the judge's table but I was almost overcome with terror when I saw lying beside it these same two pages of notes. So Caeseele also had been arrested and his hiding place discovered! Had he given me away? That was an unanswerable question for me.

After marching me into the room the two soldiers had withdrawn leaving me alone with the judge. He looked me full in the face and said, «Madame, I'm going to save you a lot of unnecessary trouble. It is usual for spies when they are brought here to deny all knowledge of the things of which they are accused, but I tell you in advance you will only be wasting your breath to try the same game! There is enough evidence here to convict you of being what you are — a dangerous spy. These papers are your work — written with this very piece of pencil found in your handbag when you were arrested. »

« Well! » he went on, when I made no reply, « what have you got to say for yourself? »

« What are these notes you are talking about? They aren't mine. » « There you are » he said « but what's the good of your denials? »

He then ordered me to write something for him so that he could compare the handwriting, although he must have known a spy would change her writing, so that wouldn't help him very much.

He bent down again to search the floor, while I pretended to help him, but still no pencil — he started to curse and swear, and grabbed me by the arm, shouting, « The pencil »..... « if you don't hand it over.....? » I looked him straight in the face and said « Search me, sir, you won't find any pencil on me. »

He flung me from him so that I fell against the table. My hand came in contact with the accusing papers. What a pity they were so bulky or they would have gone the way of the pencil!

The judge continued to shout and gesticulate like a madman: he then rang for the escort to take me back to prison, saying he knew how to make me tell where the pencil was. I was overjoyed at my success: it was certainly a bright idea to take the pencil, and it seemed very likely that the judge would not boast about his carelessness; to allow such damning evidence to be removed from under his nose in this way! Ah no, he could be trusted to keep his mouth closed. This little incident made me forget for a while the tragic side of my position. I had taken the first trick, perhaps if I played carefully all might yet be saved.

## More inquisitions.

The next day I was removed under escort to the town prison where I was lodged in one of the ordinary cells, N°. 19. The same afternoon I was again brought before the judge who had examined me the previous day and he made me write at his dictation on a sheet of paper. I obeyed, of course, but altered my style of handwriting as much as possible. When he had finished dictating he ordered me to sign the paper with my number, the judge showing me this, 8F30, at the bottom of each of the two sheets of my captured notes. I picked up the paper and infuriated the judge by pretending to misunderstand his directions. « There is no signature here, sir, for me to copy, » he almost choked with annoyance as he pointed the 8F30 out to me at the bottom of the sheets. « What does it mean, sir? » I asked. « eight francs, thirty centimes? » His only reply was to bang the bell at his side and order the escort to take me back to my cell.

I kept up similar tactics when I was examined by the Commander himself a day or two later. They can really have expected very little from these repeated examinations as they were short and mainly directed to trying to make me divulge the address to which the notes were to be sent. At each interview, since the affair of the pencil, a large revolver was always placed ostentatiously on the table, but if its object was to





M<sup>me</sup> de Beir in the prison at Bruges.



frighten me it failed — I knew enough to know that they would not go to the length of shooting me in the examining room. At the same time, though I tried to keep a brave face before these inquisitors, the mental strain was still very considerable. I had very little food given to me and that of the coarsest kind. Constant anxiety as to my own fate and that of my children meant that I was practically deprived of sleep. I was so worn out in the end with worry and apprehension, that I hardly cared whether I lived or died so long as it was decided quickly.

A few days later, the examining judge came himself to my cell, in company with two other officers, and told me that I was to be tried on the morrow. They inquired whether I wished to have legal aid in preparing my defence, but when I was told that a German lawyer only was available, I said I would sooner do without. They told me to take the night to think it over, and they would come in the morning to hear my final answer, « You may learn your death. » They went on to press me to make a clean breast of the whole business, promising that if I did so, they were empowered to spare me the death penalty. When to all their blandishments I turned a deaf ear, they at length clattered out of the cell, leaving me to my thoughts.

How long my meditations lasted I don't know, but they were interrupted, by the arrival of a gentleman

who introduced himself as the lawyer detailed to defend me. He advised me that nothing but the plain unvarnished truth would save me on the morrow. « I have carefully studied all the papers in the case, and it is no good disguising the fact that it is a question of life and death for you. »

« I am quite ready, Sir, » I said, « let them shoot me and get it over, instead of going through this solemn farce of a trial, you say you are to defend me, but if you have had any experience of these cases, you must know that the result is a foregone conclusion whatever you may say. They are only hanging things out in the hope that I will admit things which are not true. I thank you for your kind offer, but it is not necessary I can defend myself. »

On this, he also took his leave, and I was left once more to my reflections. Of the misery of that long night I will say nothing.

### **Sentenced.**

The soldiers who came for me next morning behaved with the utmost brutality, kicking and punching me all the way up to the court to such an extent that at last even the N. C. O. in charge was forced to take notice of it and bid them desist.

On the way from the prison to the Commander's office where the trial was to take place we had to pass

through the Fishmarket and as we passed the stall of the fishmonger who supplied my sister I shouted out, «Give my sister my love.» One of the soldiers immediately struck me in the back with the butt of his rifle while the others hurried me along out of earshot.

When I was hustled into the courtroom the first thing I noticed was an array of all the appliances used by Caeseele for crossing the frontier. This unexpected sight unnerved me a lot as I could not help wondering whether he had been forced to talk!

There were about 30 people in the court all of whom appeared afterwards as witnesses for the prosecution although I did not know a single one of them by sight.

The charge was read out and I heard that I was accused of having crossed the frontier on several occasions in order to take information to the enemy of German dispositions and other military matters.

I was asked if I recognised any of the exhibits and if so by means of which one I had crossed into Holland. I naturally denied having used any of them and then made my formal protest «you have no proof of anything against me gentlemen and it would be an infamy therefore, on your part to condemn me.»

A dead silence for a minute, and the prosecuting counsel got to his feet and began to speak, but what he said made no impression on my mind. What was

the use, the whole trial was a mere formality. Presently he ceased his address to the court and then, turning to me, repeated again his questions about the appliances.

« Think, Madame there is still a chance, it will be too late soon. »

I felt the eyes of everyone in court turned in my direction, while the silence became almost oppressive. I bit my lip to prevent myself shrieking out and prayed God to give me strength to hold out... The judge stood up and formally sentenced me to be shot.

Although I had told myself time and again that I could expect nothing else, I must all the same have unconsciously hoped against hope for some lesser penalty — life imprisonment for instance — I was so shaken at hearing the death sentence that I fell rather than sat down on the bench: but it was only for a moment. I pulled myself together and stood up and although I was trembling all over, I managed to say, « Thank you, gentlemen. » Before the soldiers led me away I saw the eyes of all in the court fixed on me as if to judge the effect of the sentence on me.

Months afterwards I learned that the two women who had given the letters to «Leon R.» on our eventful journey to the frontier, had both been sentenced by this court on the same day as my own trial to long terms of imprisonment, although their letters were quite harmless.



### **An expensive salute.**

The route from the court to the prison lay through the vegetable market and as we crossed the square, I walking dejectedly enough between my guards, thought I heard my name called. I looked round and saw my brother-in-law — Monsieur Forrier. The fishmonger had delivered my shouted message and Monsieur Forrier had come out in the hope of seeing me on my way back to prison. He was much moved at seeing me in such a plight and before the soldiers could prevent him, had embraced me, saying, « What have they done to you, my poor Jeanne ». He got no further, though, for two of the soldiers released his hold on me and seizing him by the collar, trundled him along in our train to the prison but not before I had called out, « Thank you ». His simple act of friendliness had somehow put new heart into me but it was not till after the war that I learned his salutation had been punished by a fine of five hundred and fifty marks and a week in prison!

### **Heart-Break.**

Back again in my cell I threw myself on to the plank bed and found relief for my overwrought nerves in a flood of tears. I had been able to wear a mask of indifference during the trial by putting from me all

were condemned, but here with no one to see me I was thoughts of what would happen to my children if I once again a poor mother, threatened with a cruel death and I cried as though my heart would break when I thought that never again in this life would I see their dear faces, or press them to my heart and cover them with kisses! Love of country could go no further; I could have purchased my life by betraying my trust but I thank God such a course never entered my head.

When I became calmer, the conviction that I had been betrayed grew the more I reviewed the facts — for a handful of francs I had been sent to my death by an action as base as was that of Judas in the long ago.

I could not bear that these traitors should go unpunished and although I should myself be dead when our victorious armies re-entered Bruges, I determined to leave some record of their infamy. With a hairpin I scratched their names in the plaster on the walls of my cell. It was a relief to my feelings even if no other eye than my own should ever read them, although for myself I was very sure the justice of Heaven would find them out.

Early next morning soldiers came to tell me that I was to be shot during the day. They asked me if I wanted to see my sister again, but I refused, saying that it would be too much of an ordeal for both of us. A little later, another soldier came to ask if I wanted

a priest, but when I heard it would be a German priest, I refused once more, saying that a German priest was no good to me. I was next asked if I wished to be blindfolded for the execution. The purpose of these questions was obviously to wear down my resistance so I replied to this last inquisitor, « No, I'M not ashamed to look my executionner in the face. » « I will show you that Belgian women know how to die for their country. »

The door slammed behind the soldier also, and I was left alone again expecting every moment the summons to face the firing party. I got up and on a sudden impulse unhooked a framed notice which hung on the wall and on the back scribbled with the little pencil, which had never left me, the names of the two traitors who had so cowardly given me up to the enemy. As I finished writing I heard the footsteps of the soldiers on the stone floor of the passage outside. So the time had come! I prayed fervently, « O God, I am soon to appear before Thee. Have pity on my poor children — guide and comfort them! » The cell door was opened with a crash and I was marched to the Commander's office in the usual way between two soldiers. I walked along automatically, seeing nothing of the streets through which we passed. Arrived at the Commander's office we had what seemed an interminable wait and then I was led back to my prison. What could be the object of these long-drawn-out agonies; these harryings

from pillar to post? The execution was not for to-day then, so why must they frighten and torture me in this way?

Towards evening the Judge himself came to my cell. As I looked steadily at him without saying a word he burst out with, «Madame, you yourself are the cause of all that has happened to you, if you had only been frank, you would have been able to save your life, but instead of that you persist in these senseless denials. However it is not too late, you can still speak. One word from you will squash yesterday's sentence. Think about it seriously, Madame, for otherwise your hours are numbered.»

As I still remained silent he rose to his feet, and before leaving the cell turned and looked at me. One would have said that he was sorry for me, for he looked quite sympathetically at me for a moment but it was only for a moment, the cruel mask re-appeared almost at once. I could not look for any pity there, the brute had no heart.

I was constantly disturbed during the next week, at all hours of the day or night by some soldier or other coming to shout, «Get yourself ready, you are just going to be shot.» They would then run off and leave me in an agony of apprehension. If in the end, sleep came to me out of sheer weariness, I was haunted by visions of the execution and would wake in a sweat of fear. Even the sentries, patrolling the

corridor seemed unable to pass my cell without beating on the door with their rifle butts. It was a refinement of cruelty, of which none but Germans would have been capable. Death, in the end, would have come as a welcome release from torture.

As a result of this treatment I broke down completely in health, and became very ill. I don't know how my sister got to hear of this, but she went many times to implore the German doctor-major, who had been so good to Ghislaine, to come and see me. He *did* come, but I was too ill to remember anything about it; but this intervention must have had some effect for the torture ceased and eventually I got a little better. My sister too had ordered a woman milk seller, to bring me some every day, under the pretext that it was for some nuns who were also imprisoned there. These good sisters enlisted the services of one of the soldiers with the result that I got some of the milk, though by no means all that was sent in.

### **Ghislaine arrested.**

While I was in prison, it will be remembered, Ghislaine had been lying at death's door after the attempt to arrest her had resulted in a seizure. My sister's devoted nursing eventually won her back to some semblance of health and on Christmas Day she was well enough to propose to walk as far as the Church for

mass. She started out in company with the servant girl but at the end of the road she was accosted by a party of soldiers, who told her that she would have to go with them to prison.

My sister had warned her many times that the arrest had only been postponed, so that Ghislaine was more or less prepared for her fate. Mme. Forrier had explained to her too, what she might expect to have to answer at the prison. « If they question you about your mother, you must deny all knowledge of her movements, and say that you cannot believe she has broken the law. Remember, one slip might mean your mother's death. »

The doctor-major was a good friend to Ghislaine once more, for by his orders she was put on a special hospital diet, and although she was harassed with questions each day by the judge, she was more kindly treated in every way than I was. It was the same judge who had interrogated me, and he confronted Ghislaine with the letter she herself had written as well as with my notes, and asked her for whom they were intended. When she denied all knowledge of the papers, they forced her to write phrases from them over and over again, for the purpose of comparison. She had of course written the letter in a disguised hand, so they gained nothing by all this.

After 96 days in prison, the Germans apparently came to the conclusion that she was innocent and she was



released and sent back to my sister's house where they were overjoyed to see her safe and sound.

Ghislaine was not long, however, in discovering that her freedom was only ostensible, for wherever she went she was followed closely if furtively by a shadower. The Germans hoped, perhaps, that she would lead them to accomplices. Although she was never molested or spoken to by these shadowers, the very fact of being watched like this told on her so much that in the end Mme. Forrier asked the Mother-Superior at the hospital, if she would take Ghislaine as a probationer nurse. My sister had herself been trained at the hospital, and the Revd. Mother received Ghislaine very kindly. She had no desire to go out and so devoted all her efforts to her work, so that the sad faced young nurse soon won her way into the affections both of the staff and of the patients, and she was herself at last left in peace.

### **Further account of my life in prison.**

My first feelings after my recovery were hardly pleasurable ones, for obvious reasons. — I had been sentenced to death, and if I had to die it might as well have been from sickness as from a firing party. Such thoughts, of course did nothing to hasten convalescence and I was, moreover denied the fresh air and tempting food usually enjoyed by invalids. It is true

I was allowed to exercise each day for a short time in the prison yard and the torturing references to my execution had ceased, but this last itself became in time a fresh cause for uneasiness. I had heard nothing of a reprieve, and if the execution had been postponed on account of my illness, why was it not carried out now that I had recovered?

To while away the long hours during which I was left to myself, I made a look-out station at the cell grating by hoisting my stool on to the little table. This enabled me to see what was going on in the prison yard. I was able to scramble down and replace the stool very quickly when I heard the soldiers boots on the stone-flagged corridor outside. While I was amusing myself in this way one day, I thought I saw Geldof, Caeseele's companion, in the yard. He must have seen me at the same time, for when I placed my finger on my lips, as a signal to keep quiet, he nodded to show that he understood.

Two days afterwards, I was taken by three officers from my cell and left in the prison yard. They were hardly out of sight when to my astonishment, «Leon R.» came out into the yard this traitor whose shout at the frontier had given the alarm. I had much difficulty not to spring at him and choke the life out of his treacherous throat, but I saw in time that this was one more of their German tricks. They made a great mistake if they

could catch me like that. So I bottled up my feelings and turned to meet him as coolly as I could. «Madame» he said, as he came up, «I hear that you are to be shot.» I affected surprise and said «Yes, but what has that to do with you? »

He seemed at a loss for words for a moment and then burst out with, «Oh, Madame, your constant attempts to get across the frontier were bound to end like this. I hope they will let me come and say "Good-bye" when the time comes.

Then my blood boiled for I saw the whole plot. The Germans hoped I should be surprised into saying something when confronted by Leon R. but I was not going to be caught like that so I turned my back on him and walked away.

A few days later, a stranger came up in the yard and spoke to me. As none of the soldiers interfered I was instantly on my guard, as of course the regulations against prisoners speaking to each other were very strict. He told me that his name was Jules P. and said he was in prison for being in possession of firearms, «And I expect they will shoot me for it he said. «Oh!» I replied, «I've been condemned already and am expecting to be executed at any time.» He went on to say that incriminating papers had also been found in his house but he had denounced the person to whom they belonged when he was examined after his arrest

« as », he said, « I was told it would tell in my favour. If you are in the same boat, Madame, I would advise you to do the same. It's everyone for himself now. »

I looked him straight in the face without replying, and my disgust was so obvious that he turned away his face, and went away stammering incoherencies and blushing right up to his eyes.

When I got back to my cell I reviewed all these happenings in my mind, and came to the conclusion that for some reason or other, my execution had been postponed, the Germans taking advantage of this postponement to send these people in the hope that they would influence me to follow their advice and so give myself away. The judge had seen that, not even to save my life would I betray my trust and he had adopted this roundabout way of getting what he wanted. Forewarned is forearmed, so that when Jules P. repeated his tactics the next day in the prison yard, he found me even less communicative than on the previous occasion. He said this time that the person he had denounced was now in prison but his own death sentence had been repealed: « If they shoot the other man that's his look out, I've saved *my* life. »

When he left me Geldof came up and said, « I've now been in prison for a fortnight and they have'nt yet found that I have a secret service letter sewn into the lining of my cap. What ought I to do? If they

find it it's all up with me. » I advised him to return to his cell and destroy the letter as soon as possible, either by swallowing the pieces or by scattering them in the wind. I also warned him to keep his mouth closed, « The place is packed with spies, and you must be on your guard against everybody here, not only against the Germans.

Geldof went off in a great hurry, I hoped in order to take my advice. The man Jules P. must have overheard some part of the conversation as he had been standing only two yards away and Geldof had taken no trouble to speak quietly. « What was that chap saying about a secret letter? »

« What letter? » I replied, « I don't know what you are talking about. » I turned my back on him and walked off.

On another occasion Jules P. came up and said he had obtained permission for his linen to be washed at home. If I liked to write a note to my sister he would hide it in the turnover of one of his collars. His wife would find it and take it to my sister's house. When I said that I had neither pencil nor paper he replied that I could use the wide white margins of some of the papers which his wife brought for him to read. He also said he had a pencil he would bring me. I pretended to fall in with his suggestion and he seemed very pleased with himself as he went away promising to bring the things next morning. He was

as good as his word as far as the materials were concerned for he brought not only the pencil and newspapers but a whole sheet of note paper was between the pages.

The Germans must have thought me very simple to fall into a trap like this for that very afternoon I was taken again into the yard although it was not the usual time for exercise. I was not surprised, therefore, when Jules P. also made his appearance and came up to me and whispered, «The coast is clear Madame, where is the note? I'm glad I can do you a good turn, we ought to stand by each other in times like these.»

«That's true» I replied «An honest and faithful friend is worth his weight in gold.» He must have sensed the sarcasm in my voice for he burst out in an astonished way with, «The note Madame, there's no time to lose, the sentry will be back any minute now.»

«Here's your paper and pencil back, I have changed my mind. There's nothing for me to say unless I tell them I am expecting to be shot every minute. They will know that soon enough, so I'm not writing a note.»

He took the things from me and I left him and went back to my cell reflecting sadly that even one's own countrymen could not be trusted. I had no bitterness in my mind for him but only a great pity.



He was in no danger of death and yet, in return perhaps, for his liberty, he had been prepared to betray me to my enemies.

Many times during the next few weeks I was visited by German officers, apparently for no better reason than prompts visitors to a Zoo to inspect some rare animal, but whatever their object, they got nothing out of me for although they often plied me with questions, I gave them no answer.

I have suffered so much at German hands that I am forced in justice, to place on record my appreciation of a German of a different calibre.

During my illness, I was waited on by a soldier orderly and when my health again broke down under the harsh prison conditions, the same orderly was again detailed to look after me. He was indeed a good friend and did everything in his power to make my life eazier and risked punishment more than once by smuggling in milk and other delicacies for me. He talked to me sometimes of his wife and children far away in Germany and we both found common ground in cursing the war and its makers.

One day he came to my cell and I saw something was the matter with him. I was not left long wondering what had happened for he said almost at once. «Madame, I've had my marching orders and am to leave for the front almost at once, and something tells me I shall not come back or see my dear

ones again.» He sank down on to the stool and began to sob as if his heart would break.

It is a heart-rending thing to see a man in tears, but I, who had been through the same thing myself, could understand and feel for him the agonies he was going through. I tried my poor best to hearten him, by reminding him of my own case, and that I had even yet not given up hope. I reminded him that his own kindness to me, an enemy of his country, had cheered me up and enabled me to put a bold face on my misfortunes — such goodness would not go unrewarded. My words seemed to have some effect for he became calmer, and when he went away he took with him a note for my sister in which I asked her to help him as much as she could in return for his goodness to me. We shook hands at parting, «Good-bye, and a safe return.» From the bottom of my heart I prayed that he might be spared to rejoin his family in peace and safety.

I suppose this parting must have occupied my thoughts very much, for the next day Jules P. came up to me in the yard and said something to the effect that he had smuggled a note out by one of the soldiers with which he was friendly. Before I realised what I was saying, I had blurted out, «Yes, and so had I.» I could have bitten my tongue out with vexation at such folly, for Jules P. looked sharply at me, and breaking

off the conversation, went off into the prison buildings, leaving me standing under the wall of that part of the prison where the nuns were quartered. As I turned away to follow Jules P. I saw a corner of a curtain lifted up and one of the nuns looked out and pointing after the retreating Jules P. made signs for me to keep my mouth closed and distrust him. I nodded to show that I understood and went back to my cell, filled with self-reproaches at my carelessness, for I did not doubt for a moment that Jules P. had gone straight in to report that I had sent a letter out of the prison by one of the soldiers. I had not long to wait for the consequences of my indiscretion, for that very afternoon, I was summoned to the office where I was subjected to a searching cross-examination about the letter and the soldier to whom it had been given. I naturally denied all knowledge of any letter. Seeing that I was obdurate on this point, the judge went on to question me about the note of which Geldof had spoken. As Jules P. had surprised us in our conversation, I thought it better to say, « Oh ! Your spies are certainly good at hearing things not meant for them, but they've found a mare's nest this time. We were talking about a note which contained the address of my family in Holland. »

« What do you take me for ? » he shouted, « Expecting me to believe a yarn like that ? »

« I don't care whether you believe it or not, I said. You may take it or leave it.

I was glad I had done this, for Geldof himself whispered to me a day or two later when at exercise, that he had followed my advice and destroyed the secret letter concealed in his cap. It was a lucky thing he had done so, for a few minutes afterwards, he was sent to have a bath although it was neither the usual day nor time. While he was bathing, his clothes had been taken away and thoroughly searched, and they had even gone to the length of unpicking all the seams, but thanks to his prompt action they had their trouble for nothing. Geldof added that although he was constantly questioned, he always denied all knowledge of that about which he was asked. «And a very good rule too, » I said.

I heard, after the war, that the soldier had duly delivered the note and my sister gave him in return, a little money together with some brandy and chocolate, with which he seemed very pleased. The Germans came soon after he had gone, to question my sister about this note and its bearer. My sister of course said that she knew nothing about the note, although a soldier had certainly come to the house to beg for chocolate for his sister, whom he said was in prison. This must have satisfied them for they did not bother her again on this point.

I was constantly seeing Jules P. in the yard, and whenever he had a chance he tried to get me into conversation. What he wanted to know now, or rather

pretended, was how to get work as an ally spy. He said he had almost served his sentence and would like to get into the secret service. I had, however, already sized him up—he had caught me napping once but never again so I told him I was surprised that he should ask me for such information.

« But, Madame, » he said, « You ought to know as you are a spy and have been sentenced for spying. »

« Oh yes » I said, « They've condemned me alright, and they say that I am a spy, but that's not the same thing as proving it. My word is as good as theirs any day. »

Jules P. was very surprised at this outburst, but he must have guessed by now that I suspected him.

I have referred before to Leon R. being present in the prison, and from my look-out post in my cell I had several, times, seen him talking to Jules in the yard, and even one day to Geldof. I noted, however, that Leon R. enjoyed many privileges in the prison and was given white bread and chocolate, he even offered me some of the latter one day but I knew he was not the sort to give something for nothing and I had no desire to accept any favours from such a fellow anyhow.

I was sitting in my cell one day, when the door was thrown open and three people came in, the judge another officer and a Belgian. Directly I saw this latter person I reconized him, although I was not

surprised that he turned his head away as he noticed me for he was the last person I should have expected to give me away. After this I felt I could trust no one.

When I erected my 'observatory' that afternoon I thought I should be in for a dull time — no one was in sight in the yard and it was so quiet that one could have heard the proverbial pin drop and I was just contemplating dismantling the chair and table edifice when I distinctly heard Ghislaine's voice and the sound came from the path beneath my window. So she had been arrested after all! All my old fears returned in force — the Germans hadn't made me talk with all their wiles, but Ghislaine, was young and inexperienced! I knew of course that she would never betray her mother knowingly but I had seen enough of German wiliness to fear that they would trick her into giving the game away. She would never, for instance, suspect the Belgian I have just referred to, of treachery.

I tried to force my head between the window bars but they were set too closely and I was almost in despair of warning her when it came to me in a flash that if I could hear her voice she could almost certainly hear mine and I shouted at the top of my voice, « Ghislaine, » many times over and when she replied, « Yes, mother? » I added « Don't talk to traitors! » Her companion must have moved her away for I got no reply to this but I hoped devoutly she had heard the warning. I hurriedly dismantled the 'observatory' af-



ter this as my shouts must have been heard by the soldiers and it was lucky I did so for I had hardly thrown myself down on to the plank bed when the sentry came in but, seeing everything as usual, went on to look in at the other cells.

The next morning I was again summoned to the office. As we arrived the door opened and the Belgian — as I will call him — came out and brushed hurriedly by me. When I got inside the office the judge asked me point blank if I had recognised the Belgian as he had identified me yesterday as a person he had often seen at the frontier.

« It's quite likely, » Monsieur le Juge, « I said, » « Some people will say anything if they think the reward is big enough and I expect this fellow hopes to get something out of you but you must be greener than you look if you believe everything a man like that tells you. »

« Taisez-vous » he shouted and flourished a sheet of paper before my face, « This is a statement of his evidence against you. Sign it here to show that you have seen it. »

I was too old a bird to be caught like that, though, and flatly refused to do anything of the sort. I was eventually taken back to my cell and that was the last I heard of the Belgian.

While I was in the prison I had often heard voices coming through the ventilator shafts and had at first

supposed that they were of prisoners communicating with one another in this way but I soon found that it was another German trick to get prisoners to talk because the conversations were invariably started by a voice which I recognised as that of Leon R. inviting confidences. One day I heard Leon R's voice replied to by what was obviously Geldof's voice. «Leon R. was asking how Geldof came to be arrested — an innocent enough opening. Geldof replied that the Germans had been on his track for more than six weeks and he had been forced three times to escape over the roof into the chicken-house while they searched the place for him. They caught him unawares on one occasion and there was no time to get on to the roof but he escaped by diving under the bed and curling up against the spring instead of lying on the floor and although one of the soldiers looked under the bed he apparently saw nothing of him for the searchers went off eventually. His actual arrest was as much a mystery to him as to Leon R. as, in spite of his precautions, he was caught off his guard and supposed he must have been betrayed... though he couldn't think by whom.

I had 'listened in' to all this conversation, hearing as clearly as if the speakers were in the cell with me. I noticed, however, that up to now Leon R. had let Geldof do all the talking but he interrupted him at this point to ask if Geldof knew where Caeseele was

hiding. Geldof replied that he supposed Caeseele must be hiding either with his uncle or with his sister-in-law at Knocke. I then heard my own name mentioned but fortunately for me the conversation was interrupted somehow and I heard no more. It was obvious that Geldof was 'straight' enough but that he was a born gossip and could not know, besides, that every word he had said would be repeated to the Germans. I was overjoyed, of course, to know that although the Germans had captured all Caeseele's gear, he himself was still at liberty.

At exercise next morning I was near enough to Geldof to whisper, «Don't trust Leon R. I heard your conversation last night. He's a traitor so don't tell him anything more.» I heard Leon R's voice that evening telling Geldof that Caeseele had been arrested but as Geldof had apparently taken my warning to heart, he did not reply and Leon presently gave it up, his information had, however, put me in a dilemma. I had consistently denied ownership of the two notes found at Caeseele's house but if he had been arrested and was likely to be condemned on this account, this rather altered the case. I should have to find some means of clearing him if I could. I decided eventually that I could still deny having written the notes but admit having taken them to the frontier, this would go a long way towards clearing Caeseele without doing me much harm and so I set about con-

cocting a story which would be likely to pass muster. I thought, of course, that if Caeseele had really been arrested I would be sure to be confronted with him.

I was quite prepared, when a few days later I was summoned before the judge again and forestalled his questions by saying straight out that I had been thinking it over and had decided to make a clean breast of it.

« That's better » said the judge, « if you are really frank about it you may do yourself a bit of good. Where did you get the papers? »

« They were given to me by a lady in the Grand Place at Bruges. I don't know her name but I have seen her once or twice before in Holland. »

The judge then asked if she was a tradeswoman in Ghent. Fortunately I remembered in time that Arthur B. had asked me if I knew such a tradeswoman when I had gone to him once in Bruges for information, so I described a wholly mythical person, tall, thin and black-haired. « She couldn't be your Gentoise, though, for she distinctly told me once that she lived in Ostend. » I added that this lady had asked me to take the notes along the Vacke road and hand them to a young man who would be waiting for me.

« What sort of young man? » the judge asked, and I supplied a description of another wholly fictitious person. The judge wanted, of course, to know all about these two people and also whether the young

man himself was going to take the papers into Holland.

I replied that I had asked the same question myself and he had told me that he was going to hand them on to another man who had offered to take them for 25 francs. The judge was plainly perplexed about my change of front and rapped out, « Why didn't you tell us all this before. We knew, of course all along that the notes were yours. »

« You misunderstand me, Monsieur le Juge », I replied, « I have all along said that the notes were not mine, and I still stick to that. All I say now is that I promised to take them to the Vacke road. »

He then pressed me to describe the lady and young man more minutely but I said I could not do so but was quite sure I should recognise them if I saw them. I had evidently given him something to think about for he ordered the soldiers to take me back to my cell but called me back as I got to the door to say, « I'm glad your memory is improving, Madame, there's still a lot of things we want to know. »

When I got back to my cell I repeated over again the descriptions I had given of the two mythical characters — I should certainly be questioned about them again and it would never do to vary their description, I must not for example make the tall thin lady of to-day, short and fat to-morrow. I was pretty certain he had swallowed my story and I chuckled to myself as I pictured the hunt for these creatures of my imagination.

I had thought myself to be alone, but looking up, I saw a Feldweber watching me intently through the spy-hole in the door. He evidently mistook my mirth for a fit of madness for he opened the door and came right into the cell, and planting himself in front of me gazed at me intently.

« Well! » I said, « I hope you'll know me again! »

He continued to stare at me for some time before he replied, « I thought you must have taken leave of your senses. I can't see anything funny in waiting to be shot. If you think you'll get off by pretending to be mad, you'll find yourself mistaken. »

When I thought things over after he had gone, I began to think that this new move of mine would mean the postponement of the execution probably for some time, as they were sure to hope for further revelations now I had begun to talk. I was prepared anyhow to tell them as many fairy tales now as they would listen to.

When I was next taken to the Commander's office I was confronted by Geldof. The judge asked me if it were to him that I had given the two notes. I pretended to inspect him very closely before replying, « No it's nothing like the man I told you about. »

When he went on to ask if I knew Geldof I said that beyond seeing him several times in the yard where we had sometimes exchanged a few words, I knew nothing about him.



Geldhof began to laugh when he heard this and said, «You need not keep it up Madame, I have told them all about it, and if you're wise you'll do the same. »

I still persisted that I did not know what he was talking about but Geldof interrupted, « It's no good Madame they know all about it. I have told them that you gave Caeseele 50 francs to take the two letters into Holland together with the little plan showing him where to take them. »

I have already referred to this plan, the Germans had found it in Caeseele's coat pocket when they had searched his house, but it would convey nothing to the uninitiated.

The judge now broke in by saying, « We've had this plan in our possession for a long time now, but cannot find where it refers to although we have even been to Flushing to enquire. Now we know it is yours you might as well own up and tell us all about it. »

I turned to Geldof and said, « You must be making a mistake, I don't know anything about anyone named Caeseele and have seen this little plan for the first time to-day. I implore you to think again, you are accusing an innocent person and the consequences will be very serious for me. I don't know why you tell such untruths.»

Geldof bowed his head as if ashamed but the judge was furious and shouted, « It is you who are telling lies. »

« Oh! if that's what you think its so good my answering your questions. » So once more I found myself back in my cell, a prey to all sorts of misgivings.

In spite of Geldof's change of front I still couldn't altogether condemn him. He knew I had been condemned to death and if he saw a chance of escaping the same fate himself by bringing further charges against me, he must have considered that one accusation more or less couldn't harm me in the circumstances. I was convinced at the same time it was to Leon R. that Geldof's confession was due. He had probably given him tobacco and a glass or two... and this was the result.

I have referred before to the sentences passed on the two women who had given letters to Leon R. on our way to the frontier. Shortly after Geldof's confession one of these women came up to me in the yard and said she had been promised the remission of the remainder of her sentence if she could get me to talk. She added that as I had already been sentenced to death it couldn't do me any harm. When I asked her what the Germans say she replied « they say » that you have the key to the whole network of spying in Belgium ».

So the silly woman thought, that to save herself a few days in prison I would say what would mean the loss of my own life! I simply turned my back and left her.

Soon after this I was again summoned to the office and on the stairs passed a man of whose face I had

some vague recollection. I puzzled about it for moments before I succeeded in placing him. It was the man who had come in on the night when I gave my notes to Mlle. Zulma Rondas from Oost Eecloo.

The judge was not yet in the room when I entered with my escort but on his table a sheet of paper was lying which looked like the same notes, I tried to get a closer view, in order to make sure but was unable to do so without attracting too much attention. If this man was a traitor, the Germans would have planned this meeting to try and surprise me into asking him what had happened to the notes. Luckily I had been on my guard.

The judge's first question showed me how the land lay. « Do you know Rondas? »

« Rondas, Monsieur le Juge? Who's he? » I replied.

« You've had plenty of dealings with him at Oost Eecloo, so you ought to know all about him. » snapped the judge. He threw the sheet of notes down in front of me, saying, « I suppose you'll say you've never seen this either, although it's in the same writing as the two notes to which you have already owned. How do you account for that? »

« Quite easily, sir. I told you I had not written the other notes and as you say this note is in the same writing it is clear I couldn't have written that either. »

« But you gave the first two notes to Caeseele, you said so yourself ».

I beg your pardon, Monsieur le Juge » I rejoined, « But I know nobody of that name and only said I had given the notes to a young man, whose name I do not know, on the Vacke road, but because, I admit this you jump to the conclusion that I wrote them. »

« Jumping to conclusions, you call it eh? » roared the judge, « You heard Geldof's account of the notes and the notes are here themselves. Geldof says you gave the notes and plan to Caeseele, and this third note, in the same writing, must have come from you too. Precious little guessing about that. If you had any-sense at all, you would see that the game is up and tell us all you know about the spy system here. »

As I made no reply to this, he took another paper from the table drawer and flourished it before my eyes saying, « And this too, I suppose, you've never seen before? »

It was difficult not to show the dismay I felt — for the paper was the copy Ghislaine and I had made of the engineer's map and in the margin was written « certified copy » — the usual way of distinguishing between casual information and that of which a secret service agent was sure. I had fondly hoped this map was long since in France. I could not understand why the Germans had only just produced this map if it had been in their possession so long; the only explanation



Visart de Bocarmé, the Mayor of Bruges,  
who asked for the reprieve of M<sup>me</sup> de Beir.





must be that as Ghislaine and I had changed our handwriting each time, they had only just then suspected it as being our work. The judge continued to press me to make a confession saying that they not only had all my papers but knew also from whom I had obtained the map.

« Well, Monsieur le Juge, » I replied, « You are much cleverer than I am then, for I'm so far from making a map like this, that I don't even know what it means. How could anyone of my poor education make such a map? »

« Don't fence with me » he shouted, « I know quite well you didn't *make* the map, Where is the original map from which you made this copy? Answer me! » when I persisted in my denial, the judge struck the bell at his side and told the orderly who answered the ring to call Herr...

Presently a German officer came in and saluted the judge but his face conveyed no more to me than had his name a few minutes earlier. He seemed very agitated, however, and I thought I understood why when the judge, said « This, Madame, is the engineer who drew the map of which this is a copy. He was billeted in your sister's house. What did you pay him for the map? » so the Germans had traced the draughtsman of the original map and had jumped to the conclusion that he was a traitor to his country and had sold it to me.

The engineer must have recognised that his honour,

if not his very life, was in my hands for to me and with tears in his eyes he implored me to tell the truth and save him from disgrace. He was an enemy, it is true, but his disgrace would in no way serve my own beloved country so I said to the judge as solemnly and impressively as I could, « Monsieur le Juge, I swear to you, by all that is dear to me, that I have never before to-day either spoken to or seen this officer, and he has certainly never sold me any map or plan. »

The judge apparently believed me for he told the engineer that he could withdraw and turning to me said, « You see where all these lies of yours lead to. A distinguished officer of unblemished character is brought under arrest through you, yet your lies get more numerous every day, and you still persist in your foolish denials. You ought to have been shot long ago! »

« Naturally, Monsieur, but only because you are credulous enough to believe any cock and bull story which anyone likes to tell you about me. Besides, what have I to gain by lying? You have just reminded me that I am under sentence of death so why should I lie? Tell me that! »

« Because you still hope to get off, I suppose; but you are a fool if you expect that by these tactics. »

« No, Monsieur le Juge, I know your kind too well to expect even common justice. There has been spying and you must have a spy, so you pitch on me as

scapegoat and without a shred of real proof have condemned me to death. Oh! no, sir, I'm not expecting any pardon. »

The judge seemed quite taken aback by this outburst, the more so as I had never before given such play to my feelings. All the same it was a great relief to have eased my mind in this way although the judge's reminder of my conviction shattered any hopes I might have entertained about a further delay in carrying out the execution. The judge did not however, reply to all this tirade and after staring at me for a little longer signalled the guards to take me back to my cell. On the stairs outside the man I had met at Rondas' house was still waiting. In spite of my brave words to the judge I was forced to admit to myself in the solitude of my cell that the long delayed execution had begun to waken new hopes in my mind. That these hopes were ill-founded now seemed certain, and the reason why the sentence had not been carried out was simply that they hoped to find through my aid the names, of other secret service agents in Belgium.

My last hopes of delay were shattered that same afternoon by the Feldweber who came and said, the execution was to take place at dawn the next morning.

At five o'clock next morning the door was barged open and the usual guard appeared and asked if I were ready. So the hour had come at last! My throat was parched, to be able to speak was impossible and

I flung myself on my knees and tried to pray but my head was in a whirl. How long I stayed like this trying to frame petitions for my children, myself and even for my executioners I do not know, but when at length I lifted my head I found that the soldiers had gone quietly from the cell. Was it just from a desire to respect my last devotions or — dreadful thought — were they playing another ghoulish jest on me? But no! They were only outside waiting for me and seeing I had risen to my feet they came in and half-led half-carried me between them out of the prison. As we passed through the gates so passed my last hope of life, for when they had tricked me before I had been taken to the office but now leaving the prison could only mean I was on my way to the place of execution.

I was hat-less and in slippers for it had not seemed worth while to bother about the niceties of toilet at such a time. Imagine then my surprise when instead of taking me towards the ramparts, where the executions generally take place, my guides led me in the opposite direction through the busy early morning streets to the Commander and so once more before the judge.

« Sit down » he snapped as we entered but this brutal mental torture so often repeated had exhausted my patience and although I was fit to drop with nervous strain, I remained standing and shaking my fist at the judge, blazed out with « I won't sit down. You harry

me from pillar to post; threaten me and torture me with these endless false alarms. Shoot me and have done with it. I'll never do as you bid me and confess to what I have not done. »

« Oh, you'll be shot alright, » said the juge « but there's no hurry » and he once more bent over the list of charges against me but this time he ended with a definite offer of freedom — liberty to go back to my children once again — and not only that but also a large sum of money if I would only explain the allied spy system to him in detail. I thank God that I still had the courage to laugh at him and his promise and say « I'd sooner be shot a dozen times than do so dispicable and mean a thing. »

At this for the second time I heard myself sentenced to death.

### **Reprieved.**

Two or three days later, towards the end of February, two officers came to me in my cell and handed me a long typewritten document, in German. I do not understand German readily so I asked them what it was all about to which they merely responded « You are reprieved » and then went off.

« Reprieved » was this another of their sorry jokes? Not three days ago I had been condemned to death by the judge Herr Grubenkeiser and to-day a paper was

thrust into my hands and I was told I had been reprieved! Who can wonder after my cruel experience of German judicial trickery, I suspected another trap. Having failed to bully me into submission perhaps they thought a little pretended kindness would serve their ends. Returning hopes struggled with such feelings as these until my head reeled again and I began to fear that the whole incident was but the dream of one on the brink of a mental breakdown. The paper in my hands, however, reassured me somewhat and as I painfully spelled it out to myself I began to realise what it meant — Days, weeks, months and even years of imprisonment almost certainly, but someday I should be free; I should still have much suffering to endure but what did that count, with the assurance of freedom in the end — I should surely not lack endurance. I should, after all, see my children once more and embrace my sister and her faithful husband again. How I prayed that victory might soon crown our arms and bring this hideous war to an end!

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It is necessary at this stage to recapitulate the course of the events recorded in the preceeding pages and also to say something of what had been going on outside war to an end!

I was arrested, on my way back from the fruitless visit to the frontier, on the 18th October, 1915 and on



the 19th of November I was condemned to death, the execution being fixed by the judge — Herr Grubenkeiser — for three o'clock in the afternoon of November the 21st, two days later.

Fortunately for me, Admiral von Schroder visited Bruges on the 21st November to unveil a memorial to the officers and men of the Marine Corps who had been wounded in the neighbourhood and died in hospitals in the town. The ceremony was timed for noon and was to be on a grand scale, some 500 German officers being present, while the town was represented by the Burgomaster and two aldermen. The Burgomaster was Messire Amedée, Comte Visart de Bocarmé, then over eighty years of age, during fifty of which he had been a member of the Chambre des Représentants.

The memorial was in the German cemetery and after Admiral von Schroder had spoken his panegyric, he asked the Burgomaster to accept the care of the memorial. The Council accepted the trust. «In the presence of death » he said, « we must all bow our heads — here we forget the War, in death friend and foe, we are one. We will respect and care for the last resting places of your friends as though they were our own. I am emboldened by the occasion, Admiral, however to ask, in their memory, that you commemorate this day of remembrance by an act of mercy. » He paused a moment, then, his voice trembling with emotion, went on. « This very afternoon has been fixed for the execution of

one of our townspeople. In the name of your galant dead, I ask for the life of Madame De Beir, the widowed mother of three children. »

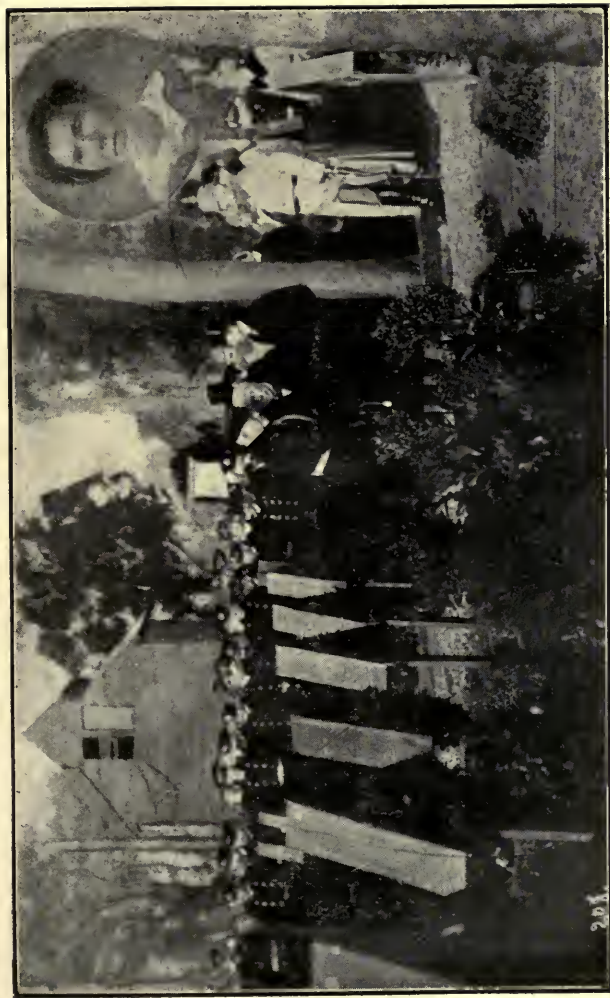
There was a deep silence, a silence which could almost be felt. A few yards away from the memorial, freshly turned earth marked the place prepared for my lifeless body! The Burgomaster's simple words had touched the Admiral's heart and after but a moment's reflection, he said. « Your request is granted. The German people know how to be merciful. »

Although I was thus reprieved on the 25th of November, it was nearly three months before I learned of it — three months of almost incessant mental torture to which I was subjected in the hope that so I might be induced to betray my country in her hour of need. It was not for many months further that I learned to what it was I owed my deliverance. If the Germans knew how to be merciful they knew also how to conceal their clemency!

« You are reprieved »..... The curt words, after three months agony, still return to my mind as a memorial of German brutality to those who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.

### **Deported to Germany.**

On the 24th of February 1916, I was warned by a soldier that I was to take a short journey next day



The Mayor of Bruges, asks the German General to grant the life of M<sup>me</sup> de Beir in return for which he promised to always care for the German soldiers graves in Bruges.



that this short journey was arranged to Oost Eecloo so that I might be confronted with Rondas family, and I determined whatever happened to stick to my denial that I knew anything about them.

Early next morning I was marched to the station in company with eight other prisoners, amongst them Leon R. and Geldof. At the station we took the train for Ghent we were bundled into a filthy shed and kept there without having broken our fast until nearly four in the afternoon, then some thin vegetable soup was doled out. Two Russian prisoners joined us at the same time. The soldiers, although keeping us in sight, made no attempt to prevent us talking, so we were able to learn from these new arrivals, that they were the survivors of a party of twenty who had been forced to work on entrenchments at the Front. The poor eighteen had all been shot when they tried to escape. The poor wretches were famished as they had had nothing to eat for two days and were grateful even for the dregs of our miserable rations.

About five o'clock we were shepherded into a train for Brussels and whether by accident or design, I found myself alone in a compartment with Leon R. The train had hardly started before he began to question me. « It was foolish of you, Madame, to make your spying notes on your sister's notepaper. It was because each sheet bore the printed heading, « Hotel-Pension Forrier » that your denials of ownership were so useless. »

I replied very curtly to this that, as the notes were not mine, I could not know how they were headed. Leon R. refused to be silenced and went on, « Madame, you did not return my mother's greeting, when she came to see me at Bruges, and she wondered if you blamed me for your being in prison? »

As he still went on talking in this strain, I got up and sat at the other end of the compartment. He knew, of course, as well as I did that the sheets had no printed heading for I had used the special tissue paper issued to me at Folkestone. When Leon R. saw that I was determined not to talk to him, he said.

« All right, Madam don't talk if you don't want to. I've been paid my thousand marks anyhow. » So I had been right all along in suspecting him as the cause of my betrayal, and now this was confirmed out of his own mouth!

We stayed that night at Brussels and I was quick to see that Leon R. was not with us when we resumed our journey next morning. At Sighburg the other prisoners continued their journey for some destination unknown while I was handed over to a couple of soldiers who conducted me to the prison. I was not sorry to have reached my destination for it was snowing heavily and it had been bitterly cold in the unheated carriages and I was shivering all over and nearly at the end of my endurance so that I flung myself just as



I was on the hard pallet in my cell and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Next morning I was given a meagre breakfast of 'coffee' made of beetroot and dry black bread and after this the ordinary prison dress was issued to me in return for my own clothes. No attempt was made to fit the dress and I found myself wearing a skirt so long that it trailed on the ground behind me like a train and other garments which only fitted where they touched, as the saying is.

During the short time I was at Sighburg I heard that shortly before my arrival four of the prisoners had tried to escape. Two of them, who were serving lighter sentences than the others, were employed about the building cleaning and were able to find and smuggle to the others the clothes in which they arrived at the prison together with a short length of rope. Sighbourg was a temporary prison and as the windows were unbarred three of them were able by knotting the bed clothes to this rope, to get safely into the prison yard but the rope broke while the fourth was still in mid — air and she fell heavily to the ground breaking both legs. What was to be done? The three were loath to leave their companion in such a state and they would all have stayed to take the heavy punishment they were certain to get for their attempt had not the injured woman herself urged them very strongly to leave her. She pressed them so much that in the end two of them

decided to go on although the other insisted on staying, saying she would give them as long a run as possible before giving the alarm. When the wardresses came, the injured was simply laid on the bed and left to get better or die as she chose. She had no medical attention whatever and when I saw her in the prison myself weeks later she was on crutches dragging one foot on the ground while the other was twisted completely round, heel to front. This poor woman was subsequently sent with me to the prison at Delitzsch as if even the wretched treatment at Sighburg was too good for her.

The two prisoners who got away were befriended by a German peasant woman who took pity on their wretchedness and gave them shelter and a little of her own scanty store of bread and put them next morning on the right road. After almost incredible hardships they eventually reached the frontier but here, almost within sight of freedom, they somehow excited the suspicions of a passing labourer, who reported them to the soldiers and they were dragged back from the very threshold of liberty to the most rigorous punishment under the savage woman governor at Sighbourg.

I was only kept for 12 days in Sighbourg and then dressed again in my own clothes, was entrained with 46 other women for the prison-camp at Delitzsch in Saxony.

## The prison.

After a bitterly cold all-night journey we arrived at Delitzsch, near Leipsic, early the following afternoon. The streets of the little town were crowded and we were subjected to a great deal of abuse on our way to the prison, while many of the passers-by threw stones and street refuse at the wretched prisoners; the guards making no efforts to restrain them.

The prison-camp was itself housed in a great gloomy mediaeval fortress-like looking building with a lofty tower. There was a tradition that this place had been the head quarters of one of the German robber barons in ancient times and its appearance certainly did nothing to discredit the legend. We had started early the previous day, had travelled all night and it was now about four o'clock and during all that time our only food had been two small pieces of stale dry bread, but whatever hopes we may have entertained of a more liberal meal on our arrival at the prison were dashed when we saw the small bowls of thin, vegetable soup — more like dirty water than anything else — with which we were each supplied. This meagre repast was taken, Passover fashion, standing in a bare stone corridor while we were awaiting admission to the dormitory. Having partaken of the soup we were admitted into this dormitory which was in an attic. In the dormitory were some 44 iron cages, each about 7' 6"

«long by 3' / wide. The cages were closed with an iron gate fastened with an iron bar which was secured by a padlock at the end of each row of cages so that they were all opened or shut at the same time. The whole dormitory reminded me irresistably of the Zoo and surely the animals in the Zoo were no more closely confined than were we the victims of the war machine at Delitzsch.

Each cage was furnished with a small iron bed, a stool and a pail. On the bed were two thin blankets, a mattress and a bolster so tightly stuffed with straw that they were as hard to sleep on as the cobbles of my native Bruges. At night the prisoners had to put all their day clothes on the stool which was then placed outside the cage. This was doubtless with a view to making any attempt to escape more difficult, but it seemed at the time a heartless deprivation of what might have been used to keep some measure of warmth in our starved bodies during the night. The next day the new arrivals were issued with the regulation prison dress and their own clothes were taken away again. The prison kit consisted of a cotton chemise, a cotton cap, fairly thick combinations, cotton stockings, a thin brown holland dress a check cotton handkerchief and a white apron. For footwear clumsy sandals with wooden soles. All this clothing with the exception of the chemise, as I have just said had to be put outside the cage at night and in the confined space one had to

move about very carefully to avoid bruising one's bare arms and legs on the iron bars.

The dormitory in which we were quartered was immediately under the roof and the broken tiles let in water freely when it rained, so even our sleep was disturbed by reminders of our wretched state.

Escape under such conditions seemed so impossible that the hourly patrols by the wardress on duty seemed almost an absurdity but they were never omitted for a single night.

I could not sleep at all the first night because of the cold and hunger and it was a relief when the gates were opened in the morning and we were allowed to take in our day clothes and permitted to dress. Between the two rows of cages was a long table on which were a few basins of frequently frozen water in which we were compelled to wash in turn before we were allowed to put on our dresses. A rag — no bigger than a handkerchief was then given to each prisoner with which she was expected to clean her cage. After doing this to the wardress's satisfaction, and making our beds, we were then marched to the assembly hall. The prisoners in each dormitory had then to clean their own part of this hall.

Breakfast, consisting of « coffee » made from roasted acorns, and a hunk of black bread, was then doled out at 8 o'clock, after which each prisoner was then given work to do, such as mending soldier's uniform

trousers, or knitting stockings, while the more skilful were allowed to weave tapestry.

Dinner was at midday and consisted of beetroot soup, unvarying in its tastelessness. The latter was often so bitter, that it turned the stomach at once and was quite uneatable in spite of our famished condition. During the whole 30 months I was at Delitzsch, I only had potatoes four times and these were all towards the end of the war, when each prisoner was given six small potatoes cooked in their skins.

There was a compulsory break at ten o'clock for exercise. This consisted of walking round the yard at metre intervals, wardresses watching us closely all the time, to prevent any attempt at speaking to each other.

At six o'clock beetroot soup again for supper.

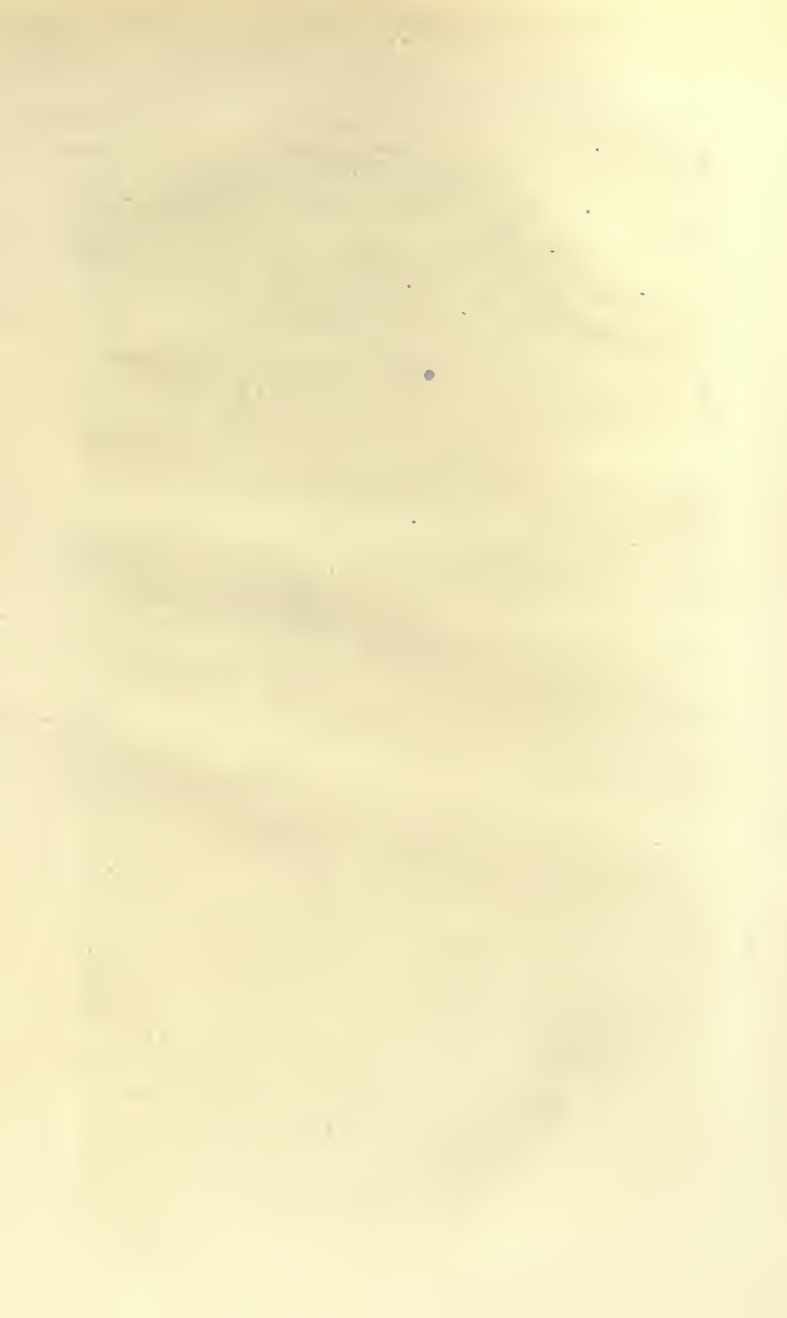
On such a diet we were all reduced to almost skeletons and when it is remembered that the prison was not heated even in the bitterest weather it will be understood through what privations we had to pass almost every day. At exercise, one or more of the prisoners would fall down from sheer weakness, only to be dragged out of the way by the callous wardresses, while the rest were urged along on their weary round. No difference was made in diet for those who went sick in this way, it was simply a case of take it or leave it.

On one occasion I followed the example of others





ae de Beir clothed in the garb of the Delitzsch Prison in Saxen.



whom I had seen at times pick up scraps from the rubbish in the yard which we thought still eatable. I found a crust of sodden bread by the path and ate it ravenously. It was a dear meal as this scrap of bread nearly poisoned me and I was in a critical state for more than four days.

After I had been at Delitzch four months, our miserable menu was enriched by the issue of a dry crust at 4 o'clock each day. In our starved eyes this was a stroke of good luck, although there was no drink of any kind given to help it down.

Although on occasions the soup served to the prisoners was so nauseous that the odour alone almost turned the stomach, we dared not refuse it, as if we had done so it would have been served up again and again until it had been consumed.

### **Death in the camp.**

One of the batch of prisoners sent with me from Sighburg to Delitzch was an old Frenchwoman — a poor old thing over 70 years of age. She had begged unsuccessfully to be allowed to remain at Sighburg, but her name was «on the roll» so she had to go. This old woman was a martyr to rheumatism and on this account always wore flannels next to her skin. The warders at Delitzch, however, ordered her to take them off at once directly we arrived there as they were not

part of the prison clothing. When she protested, the wardress tore them off her back by force. The result was that she broke down in health completely and tossed about all night, coughing, complaining and groaning. The wardresses would not, however, let her stay in bed next morning although they had to dress her and carry her down into the assembly hall. Seeing her state, her neighbour started to clean her square of floor as well as her own, but directly the wardress saw this, the rag was snatched out of her hand and the poor old woman forced to clean it herself, although she could only do so by sitting on the floor and rubbing the stone feebly with the rag. At ten o'clock she was forced to go for the usual exercise although she could only get along with a wardress supporting her on each side. When we got back she begged to be allowed to keep on the bonnet which was our regulation outdoor dress but she was refused and the bonnet torn from her, « You must all be treated alike or you will all be wanting privileges ».

« Why don't you kill me outright and have done with it — this is just slow torture? » These were almost her last words for the wardresses had to carry her to her cage. The same brutal routine went on for three more days, but on the forth morning she was not brought to the exercise hall and in the evening her cage was empty. The word went round the prison a day or two later, that she was dead.

One of the prisoners in my dormitory was a certain Madame L. and one day she was summoned whilst we were in the assembly hall to the prison office to be interviewed by a German officer whom I had seen and recognized on his way to the office. It was Herr Grubenkeiser — the judge under whom I had endured so much at Bruges.

Every hour during the night we were surveyed Marie L. slept beside me in the dormitory and it was not long before I had observed that she had been placed there by the Germans to survey me continually. I think personally that it was the intense sufferings that forced this poor woman to work for the Germans as she was weak and owing to her state of health it was impossible for her to be courageous.

The rule against talking applied of course to all parts of the prison, but in the hall it was practically impossible to prevent the prisoners talking together and I heard many a thrilling war story of war experiences from fellow prisoners while we were working in the hall.

Marie L. began by saying that she had been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for spying and being in possession of such war contraband as rubber and a bicycle I replied that I had been sentenced to death but had been reprieved and the sentence commuted to life imprisonment. When she went on naturally enough, to ask why I had been sentenced, I answered, « Because I'm supposed to be a spy. »

« And weren't you? » she asked. I replied « certainly not ». Naturally I had already suffered enough and was sufficiently cunning not to confide in a fellow prisoner whom I had never known before.

It was lucky I did so, for another prisoner named Mlle. Titeca, a brave patriot from Westkerke-les-Ostende, told me next day that Marie L. had also been questioning her. As she wanted to know such things as to the address to which Mlle. Titeca had taken her letters, her suspicions had been aroused and she had only given vague answers. It was certainly suspicious that Marie L. should know so much without being told so much of Mlle. Titeca's affairs.

Marie L. was summoned to the office again the next morning and a prisoner of the 'cleaner' class (i. e. a prisoner serving a light sentence) heard that she had had a long interview with a German officer, apparently Grubenkeiser. In the evening Marie L. herself told us that her sentence had been reduced to two years ordinary imprisonment and she was in fact shortly after given a free pardon and allowed to leave the prison and return home.

The day after she had gone, the wardress told us that she had gone back to France and was going to work for Germany in future. The wardress further insinuated that if we had any sense, we ought to offer to do the same.

We were naturally loathe to believe such infamy of a



country woman and tried to think that the wardress was lying. We heard nothing more of Marie L. however during our stay at Delitch but after the Armistice, she was arrested by the Belgians and put in prison. I was one of those called for her trial at Mons in February 1921. I had determined to plead with the court on her behalf and by showing them some of the horrors of the German prison life, to enlist their pity for one whose courage had not been equal to the strain and hardships of cold and slow starvation. It was a picture I felt I could draw convincingly and perhaps it would have mitigated her punishment at least for she was being tried by no brutal callous Germans but by her own country-men.

This is what I planned but when the court assembled at Mons, neither witness nor judgment were needed. The president of the court rose to his feet and, uncovering his head, said, « The accused committed suicide in her cell last night. She has been her own executioner! »

### Correspondence.

On Sundays, all Catholic prisoners went to mass in the prison, for me, at least, it was the one relief in the awful monotony of prison routine. It must have been so with the others too, for everyone seemed more cheerful. For myself, the soup lost some of its bitter-

ness and the bread seemed softer, while I felt my store of courage and strength had been renewed.

On Sunday afternoon, pencils and paper were given out to all the prisoners and we were allowed to write home and although I was told that my letters would not be forwarded I was given paper and pencil like the others. In the circumstances, however, I never troubled to hand in letters although the wardress on duty was always urging me to do so.

Notes written on Sunday afternoon were smuggled from one person to another during the Mass the next Sunday. In the circumstances I think no-one would accuse us of irreverence.

On Sunday, much to my astonishment, I saw Mlle. Zulma Rondas among the prisoners. So like myself, she was still in custody! The next Sunday, a note from her was passed to me during Mass and I was so overjoyed that I set myself in the afternoon to compose a reply. The wardress must have wondered what I was writing as I had always refused to write before, so she crept up quickly behind me. I stopped writing at once, of course and the wardress, supposing that the letter was finished, reached over my shoulder to snatch it away, but I crumpled the sheet up quickly in my hand so that she could not get it. « Give me the note at once » she shouted.

« I'll see you in Jericho first » I replied, « it isn't yours, and you aren't going to get it. » When she

called out for the other wardresses to lend a hand, I laughed in their faces and putting the paper, which by now I had squeezed into a pellet, into my mouth I swallowed it.

This outburst, needless to say, meant pretty severe punishment for me, but all the same, I felt it was quite worth while.

**« Vade retre, Satana! »**

One day in June I was surprised to get a summons to the office but my surprise was quickly turned to resentment, when confronting me across the table was Herr. Grubenkeiser; — the judge who had twice condemned me to death at Bruges. It is not surprising, therefore, that I answered his inquiry as to how I was getting on by saying that if he had come to gloat over his handiwork — to see to what straits slow starvation was reducing me, he would doubtless be satisfied.

He seemed in no way put out by this sarcasm but calmly said, « well, now we understand one another, perhaps you will tell me if you know a M. Bontemps of Bruges? »

« As far as I can remember I've never heard of him. »

« That's odd, since you were at his child's christening twelve years ago. »

« Well, if you know all about it, why ask me? »

« You'll be interested to know that he's just been sentenced to nine years imprisonment. »

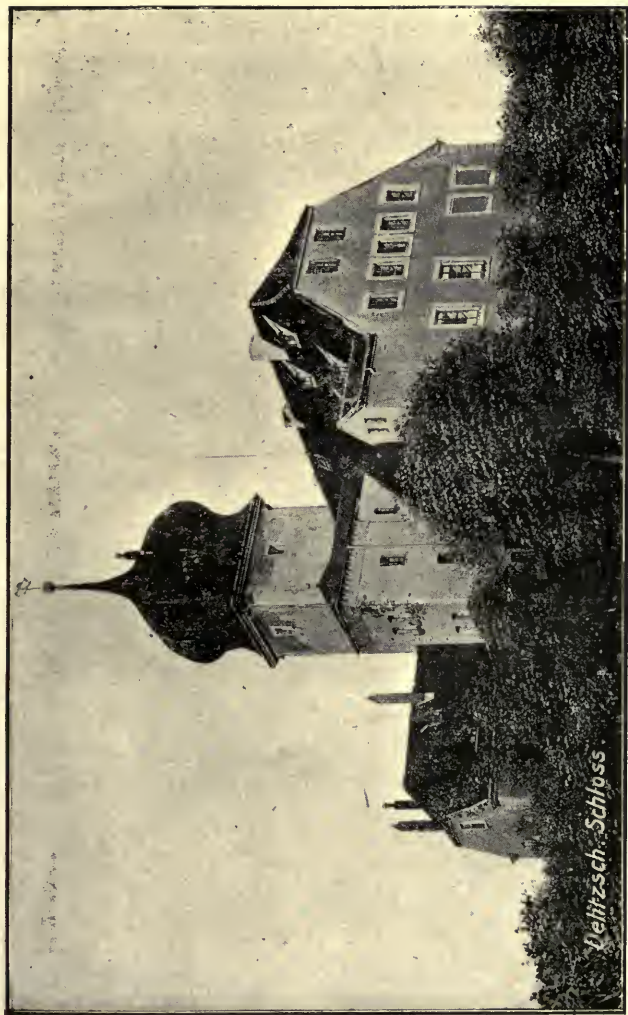
« Another of your victims I suppose, » I replied  
« Aren't you proud of your cleverness in sentencing innocent people ? »

« What part has he taken in your spying ? » Grubenkeiser was getting angry now and shouted his questions just as he **had done** so often at Bruges, but I replied quite quietly.

« Who says I have done spying at all? I do remember the name you mentioned but only as a friend of my sister's. Don't forget I have not been living in Bruges for years except for occasional visits to my sister. It must have been on one of these visits that I went with her to this baptism you speak about. I hardly think I should know Monsieur Bontemps again if I were to see him. »

« Well, let us leave him for the present as you are determined to give me no help about him. We won't say any more about your spying, either, though I want you to realise that I was only doing my duty in sentencing you. All that is done with, now what do you say to coming in with us as a German agent ? »

He saw I was about to reply and stopped me with a wave of his hand saying « Wait until I've finished. You needn't make up your mind at once. You know now what prison life means, I won't say that you deserved all you've got but it is certainly only by an



The German prison in Delitzsch Saxen where M<sup>me</sup> de Beir was imprisoned  
for 33 months.





act of mercy that you are still alive, I offer you not only your own liberty but also that of your daughter. She has already been condemned to death and will be shot unless I can say on my return to Bruges that you have decided to come in with us.

These dreadful words made me fall pale and trembling, into my chair. My mouth was so parched, my tongue would not perform its office and it was some minutes before I could compose myself enough to reply, « Why should you want me? Haven't you enough Germans to do your spying without asking me to do this infamous thing? »

« But what about your daughter? » was all he said in reply.

« Only a coward would make a threat like that, — either I betray my country or my daughter dies! Well, do your worst, I'm sure Ghislaine would prefer to die a thousand deaths than that her mother should commit such an infamy. Shoot me as well, if you like, it will be better than this torture. »

As a result of this refusal, my rations were still further reduced and I was now confined all day to my cage.

### **Back to Bruges.**

This state of things went on until November when I was informed that I was being sent back to Bruges.

This was not altogether welcome news, I had by now got accustomed to the prison camp routine and at Delitzch I was at least safe from execution whereas at Bruges anything could happen, neither could I think of any reason for the transfer though I puzzled my head for hours fruitlessly.

My fellow-prisoners were not very comforting either, with their reiterated assurances that I should not return to Delitzch again.

Then the demon of doubt returned to torture me again. Supposing Grubenkeiser had been speaking the truth for once when he came to Delitzch in June and Ghislaine was really in danger then the awful thought, had she already been shot?

My furtive farewells to my fellow-prisoners affected me very much. Most of them had been real companions in distress and for all we knew we should never meet again.

I was escorted by two soldiers who carried the usual bread ration for the journey and although this took two whole days they gave me not so much as a single crust so that when we arrived at Bruges in time for the mid-day soup, I was nearly famished and on my last gasp.

But for my anxiety about Ghislaine there were many things at Bruges which were preferable to Delitzch — the food was much better and the beds softer. Indeed the soup given to me on my arrival tasted so delicious to my starved plate that I even dared to ask for more,

telling the wardress that I had had nothing for two days. The marvel is that I got it!

Another thing at Bruges was the absence of the continual supervision by wardresses which had made the prison camp life so much like a hell. Even breathing my native air made a difference in my spirits and when I learned from other prisoners that Ghislaine had not been shot or even condemned to death, I took new heart again.

The day after my arrival, a group of high officers were talking in the yard at exercise time when one of them, wearing an uniform covered with gold braid and decorations came over and asked me who I was. When I replied that I was Mme de Beir he only remarked, « Oh, so you're Mme. de Beir! » And turning on his heel, rejoined the group of officers. When, later on, I asked one of the other prisoners who he was, it was an enlightenment to be told that it was Admiral Von Schroder, for at that time I did not know that it was to him I owed my escape from the firing party.

I was not left long in ignorance of the reason for my recall, for a day or two later I was summoned to the office, and there, arraigned before Grubenkeiser himself, was Caeseele! With a great effort I controlled myself and in reply to the question as to whether I knew Caeseele answered firmly, « No. » When Grubenkeiser asked Caeseele a similar question, much to my surprise, he said, « Why, yes, it is Madame. » I had

then perforce to turn round and, after looking at him carefully, pretend to recognise him, « What! It's you is it? How you have changed, I didn't recognise you at first. »

The judge here interposed a question, « Madame, you took two notes to this man's house, didn't you? »

I looked hard at Caesele to give him his cue and said « I took one letter for my son, who is a soldier, but nothing else. »

The judge was apparently alive to the fact that I was dictating the answers to Caesele and ordered me to be removed. Later in the evening, however, he came in company with two other officers to my cell and started to question me, but I threw myself on to my bed and persisted that I was still too exhausted with my recent privations to answer any more questions. They were, naturally, furious and kept on firing questions at me but as I didn't answer they gave it up in the end and went away.

I was summoned as a witness for Caesele's trial and questioned closely about the two notes written in ink and the pencil note. I pretended to be very stupid at first and then said to Caesele, « I've never written a word in your house, have I? All I gave you was a letter to my soldier son and you yourself asked me in return to take two similar letters to Bruges. The judge knows this quite well as I had them on me when I was arrested. »

The judge guessed I was priming Caeseele as to what I had admitted and what I had denied and told me not to speak until I was spoken to and then to address the court and not the prisoner. When I tried again to warn Caeseele in the same way he snapped out « Nach das Gefang! »

Before they took me back to prison, however, I glanced at Caeseele and saw that he had grasped my intention. The court condemned him to death but the sentence was afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life, for lack of evidence.

### **Delitzch again.**

#### **Caeseele's story. En route.**

I was one of a number of prisoners detailed for Germany the morning after the trial, two others being Geldof — who had also been a witness and Caeseele himself.

We three were together most of the time and as the guards made no attempt to stop us talking I was able at last to satisfy my curiosity as to how the judge had come into possession of the two notes I had given to Caeseele within less than two days of my arrest, though Caeseele himself was then still at liberty. I will give the explanation as nearly as may be in his own words, « You will remember, Madame, that as I had not been able to cross the frontier with the notes, I left you

talking to my wife while I went to hide them and other papers in the yard. The hiding place was under the dog's kennel.

Unfortunately Leon R. knew of this hiding place as he had seen me place there letters he had brought himself.

« You had started back for Bruges barely an hour when I saw a large swift car coming towards the house. I called out to warn my wife and daughter and ran away through the garden. It was lucky I did so for the car stopped at the door and the three officers it contained went right through the house, shot my poor dog with a revolver, and, overturning the kennel, found the jar containing the papers. They did not stop to search the house but returning to their car hurried back full speed to Bruges.

« As you know, my house is a café, and the hunchback who came while you were there to ask me to help him over the frontier, came in and called for a drink. My daughter told him to wait and snatching up a bundle of letters for soldiers which were in the cupboard, started to cram them one by one into the fire. She was terrified lest the Germans should return and search the house. As the letters burned too slowly for her, she caught up the remainder and with a spade buried them among the potatoes in the garden. She had hardly got back to the house when the car came again. This time the Germans made an official



search and would have gone with the little sketch map you had made to show where the letters were to be taken in Holland but for the hunchback, the little plan was in the pocket of an old waistcoat of mine, so the Germans must have searched pretty thoroughly. They were just about to go when the hunchback got up and told them to follow him. He had watched my daughter bury the letters and now led the Germans straight to the place.

I was able to elude capture for a long time by hiding in the woods. My wife and daughter brought me food at night together with a note of the rendez-vous for the morrow. This constant changing of the meeting place was really the cause of my success in evading pursuers for so long. I owed my capture in the end to a soldier catching sight of me by chance and reporting it. The Germans were soon on my track but as I ran like a hare, I should still have escaped if they had not fired at me hitting me in the leg with one shot while another bullet smashed up my big toe. So the first week or two after my arrest I spent in hospital. Yesterday as you know, I was condemned to penal servitude for life. »

Caeseele's long story had been so absorbing to us that we had quite lost count of time. Geldof and I had in turn told our stories and by that time we had arrived at Liege.

I told Geldof how surprised I had been to hear

him say that he had told the Germans everything, but it was impossible to cherish any enmity against him when he urged that the wily Leon R. had been his evil counsellor. He had at first been given chocolate biscuits and cigarettes to loosen his tongue but in spite of these bribes he would have said nothing had not Leon R. made him drunk and, « wine in, wits out » had been true in his case. He insisted that he had done nothing with reasonable intention and, as he said, he had certainly gained nothing by his disclosures whereas Leon R. was a free man.

Geldof enlarged on his sufferings in prison and said he was slowly being starved to death. Caesele and I both shook hands with him saying that we both bore him no ill-will.

At Liege we were shut up in dark underground dungeons relics of mediaeval tyranny. The dungeons were nauseous and at the same time so appallingly cold that it was quite impossible to sleep.

Geldof tried to keep the circulation in his body going by jumping up and down but the noise made by his efforts apparently annoyed the guard, for he came into his cell and gave poor Geldof such a savage blow with the butt of his rifle that the boy was beaten to the ground senseless and died from his injuries less than three months later.

In the morning we were given some « ersatz » coffee and a crust of bread each and after stamping about to

warm ourselves were once more entrained for Germany. At different places en route the party was diminished by twos and threes, until when the train reached Delitzch, I was the only prisoner left. I was not surprised to be back although I was told by the other prisoners that they were considerably surprised to see me at Bruges as the wardresses had given out that I was beingsent back to Bruges, to be shot, improving the occasion by saying that at the least breach of discipline, they might expect to follow my example. The prisoners shewed great kindness in welcoming me back, so far as they could and they all commented on the improvement in my appearance my little 'holiday' had occasioned. The prison camp was of course a place of horror, but better even Delitzch than death. I was by now free of anxiety as to my own fate as it seemed certain anyhow that I should not be shot and I was moreover sure that Grubenkeiser had been lying again in what he had said about Ghislaine. It had cheered me a lot to have talked with Caeseele and Geldof and although there was no change for the better in the prison routine or food at Delitzch, I left somehow better able to bear with it, — so powerful is the influence of the mind on the body.

### A Souvenir of 17.

I have already related the death of one of the

prisoners as a direct result of the barbarous prison discipline, but her death affected us all much less on account of her age and infirmities than did that of another prisoner who was more of our age. This poor lady was quite broken in health by the prison fare and harsh treatment and died in May 1917. I shall always treasure a copy of the verses composed on this occasion by one of the prisoners. They are rough and unpolished, of course, but I reproduce them here (an English version is given as an appendix,) as they recall for me now as nothing else can, the atmosphere of the prison camp in which Marie Mouton met her fate.

Par une soirée tiède et embaumée

Les lilas du parc et les maronniers —

Etaient tous si beaux et bien fleuris.

Tout était calme dans la prison,

C'était l'heure du repos et de la méditation.

Marie Mouton, prisonnière dans une cellule

Avec Adrienne Beljean, sa compagne d'infortune,

Lui dit le soir, après avoir prié,

Ce qu'elles faisaient toujours en communauté.

« J'ai du mal au cœur, et je souffre,

Donne-moi ta main, car je sens que j'étouffe »

Adrienne répond en lui prodiguant ses soins;

« Calme-toi, le docteur te consultera demain. »

Puis avec des caresses lui donne un long baiser

Et Marie s'endormit pour l'éternité...

Loin de son pays et de sa famille.

Pauvre Marie si douce et si gentille!  
Regrettée de toutes ses compagnes affectées,  
Qui demandent d'aller près du cerceuil prier...  
Elles lui offrent en guise de fleurs  
Une messe de chants et de pleurs  
Après la touchante allocution du curé,  
Seule elle est partie pour aller reposer  
Bien loin de sa chère Belgique...  
Couche a jamais sur le sol de Delitzsch.  
Nous laissant a tous le souvenir  
De l'agonie et de sa mort en exil...

---

Aussi, de retour dans nos foyers  
En y remportant sa photographie,  
Nous ne devons jamais oublier  
Cette compagne a jamais exilée...  
Nous demanderons a Dieu dans sa clémence,  
Qu'il veille sur elle, morte pour la  
Belgique et pour la France.

### **Prison Palavers.**

Four of us were called to the prison office one day for instructions as to the work we were to do and when she had finished giving orders the wardress said, « I suppose you know that the war is nearly over? » We looked at each other for a minute without replying, then I said, « Well we shall soon be home again then for the war will never end until the Germans have left Belgium. »

« If you think that, » the wardress exclaimed, « You are bigger fools than you look. Why the brave German troops are just outside Paris! We have won the war and not you and your cursed allies. » I don't believe a word of it, I said, « And what's more, with the allies it's today in Paris, tomorrow in Berlin. »

One of the other prisoners was evidently afraid that these outspoken sentiments would offend the wardress and tried to tone them down by saying, « Well what does it matter, Paris or Berlin, I don't care so long as we can go home. » My temper was up, however, and I shouted, « Not I! I'd sooner do another ten years here than go back home while you Bosches are there. » My outburst was rewarded by a day's solitary confinement without food of any kind, but all the same that wardress at any rate knew my mind.

On another occasion the same wardress said, « Spies are just vermin and ought to be exterminated. » She looked me all over very offensively as she said this, so I just laughed and said, « Well, in that case, you'd be giving the worms indigestion yourself by now. We all know about your spying in Belgium and France before the war. »

Delitzch was not only a war prison but also a civil penal establishment and it was from German prisoners that we had learned this wardresses spying exploits.

In the summer of 1917 we were given forty biscuits a week each. It is almost impossible to say how gra-



teful this ration was — it meant practically a new lease of life.

I have said very little up to now of the prison staff. The wardresses must have been recruited because of their brutality for they let no opportunity slip of humiliating and punishing the prisoners, generally for the most fanciful reasons and even for no reason at all.

It was the practise of the Governess of the prison to hold a mock court to try prisoners accused of breaches of prison discipline. She presided over this famous court herself and the members were the wardresses. It was a mockery of a trial as the prisoner was not allowed to say anything and punishment was awarded on the bare word of the wardress, who was herself a member of the court. I made several appearances before this court myself and served many days 'cells'. This was the worst punishment given, and consisted of solitary confinement, on half rations, in one of the original dungeons of the castle — a horrible, nauseous hole, far below the ground level, without either light or air. In the bitterest weather the wretched prisoner had no bedding other than a thin cotton blanket on a plank. No one could endure long periods of such torment and remain sane, so the practice was, to split the sentence up into periods of three days. My own sentences were generally due to my inability to take wardresses' petty

faultfinding and nagging without answering back. In the early summer of 1918, a prison official came to the camp and lectured the prisoners in French. We were seated in rows and such an opportunity of communicating with each other in whispers made me, at any rate give so little heed to the lecture that I cannot even remember what it was about. At the end, however, the lecturer said she would be in the camp for three days so that she could interview any prisoner who had a complaint or a petition to make.

I took advantage of this permission to complain that no opportunity had been given to me of writing to or receiving news of my family, « I have three children, Madame, and they must be as anxious to hear from me as I am to know how they fare. » The visitor made a pretence of searching through the papers on her desk and then said, « Don't worry about your children, your son was killed at the Front months ago, and as you are serving a life sentence you will never see your daughters again. You may as well make up your mind that you will end your days here. »

Although my spirits sank at these words, I put on a bold face and said, « My heart tells me that my boy is *not* dead and our brave armies must be victorious in the long run Germany will be broken in the end and we shall all go to our homes in peace. »

She pretended to be amused at my confident assurance and said she would see what could be done

about my request, « Although I am afraid that it will not be granted. »

Two days later the prison chaplain — a kindly old man — came to see me and after a few rambling remarks about the lecture and so on, came to the purpose of his visit, which was to say that my request had been refused. The chaplain seemed genuinely sorry to give me such news but I assured him that I had expected no other answer. I thanked him for his kindness, when he went on to promise that he would try personally to get me this meagre concession although I knew he couldn't do anything.

I waited for a few weeks and then, in July, wrote to the Spanish Ambassador saying I had been in prison for three years without news of my family and asking and asking him to use his powerful influence on my behalf.

I received a reply the next day signed by the Ambassador to the effect that he could not intervene in my case. This reply, however, came so quickly and it was couched in such illiterate terms that I knew my letter had never reached its destination and this famous reply had been written by one of the wardresses. This conviction was confirmed when the letter was quietly removed from my clothes a day or two later. It was alright to use a forgery to dishearten a prisoner but it would never do to leave it in my possession.

There was some German national festival or other

during July 1918 and although I do not know to this day what festival it was, we rejoiced more than the patriotic German for we were allowed an hours walk in the prison garden and given permission for the first time to converse freely with other prisoners. The hour passed like a few minutes!

### **Alarming News!**

Labour was very short in Germany in 1918 and the prisoners serving short sentences were all taken to work in the fields outside the prison where they met English, French and Belgian prisoners of war similarly employed. These soldiers naturally had much more freedom than we enjoyed and moreover knew exactly how the war was going on. Although, of course, it was strictly forbidden for these soldiers to communicate with our prisoners, it was impossible to enforce the rule and although the prisoners working outside the prison had separate dormitories, notes circulated pretty freely between us during the Sunday Mass.

We heard in this way not only how the war progressed but of the growing dissatisfaction among the German people about the war, and the common talk of a revolution brewing. Not the least alarming item of this news was that the German peasants were talking openly that we prisoners were taking the bread out of their mouths. It seemed more than likely that if

it came to a rising the prisoners would be the first to suffer. Our lot at this time was if possible more wretched than at any other time during the war.

### **Ghislaine.**

While all these things were in progress at Delitzch Ghislaine continued steadily at her nursing in the ancient hospital of St. John in Bruges. She was latterly in charge of the German wards and it was no easy matter to forget the suffering her mother and she herself had endured at the hands of their countrymen, she was able by a miracle of grace to put into practice the Divine precept of forgiveness. She thought of her charges no more as enemy soldiers but as human beings sorely in need of her ministrations. Mme. Forrier and Ghislaine knew long before I did myself that my sentence had been commuted and my daughter was full of gratitude to Admiral Von Schroder, — the pardoner of her mother.

### **October 1918.**

Rumour was very busy during October as to the Germans leaving Bruges and patriotic citizens dug out of bottom drawers the long concealed tricolours with which they were going to welcome the victorious German Armies.

° About the middle of the month the nun-gatekeeper at the Hospital was surprised to receive a visit from Admiral Von Schroder himself and not a little disturbed when he said he had come to see Fraulein de Beir. Part of the German army had already left the town and the good sister thought the Admiral was proposing to take Ghislaine away into Germany with the rest of the troops, for this reason she only pretended to look for her and told the Admiral Ghislaine could not be found. The Admiral was not to be put off, however, and in the end the sister brought him to the ward where Ghislaine was attending the German wounded. He went up to Ghislaine, saluted ceremoniously and said. « Fraulein de Beir, the German armies are leaving Bruges but our wounded and sick must remain here and I leave them in your charge —I know you will not fail in your duty. »

Ghislaine was very touched and said, « I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking you for sparing my mother's life, you may rest assured your wounded will lack no service I can give them. »

The Admiral saluted again and took his departure. That afternoon he left Bruges for ever.

### Armistice.

At Delitzch the dull monotonous routine dragged on. We had ceased to complain of our lot and



although the ravages of prison life were evident enough in the emaciated forms of the prisoners, nothing we could do or say would effect any improvement so we suffered in silence.

During the night of November 10th., we heard sounds of unusual movement in the prison yard and thought the threatened revolt against the wretched allied prisoners had broken out.

Directly it was light enough to see I pulled myself up by the bars until I could see through the skylight and to my terror saw the yard below full of armed soldiers who all seemed to be in a state of excitement. My exclamations made other prisoners follow my example and soon there was a chorus of horrified exclamations. Our last hour had come! We had endured all these long hours of physical and mental torture for this...

The shouting and swearing of the horde in the yard sounded the knell of our cherished hopes of deliverance, there was no escape as our cages were doubly locked as usual and even our clothes were outside on the stools.

About five o'clock in the morning, we heard the clatter of feet on the stairs and in an indescribable state of panic awaited our fate. The door burst open and a rabble of soldiers burst into the room and impatiently shook the gates of the cages while one of the wardresses fumbled with the padlock.

Mixed up with the war prisoners were German women sentenced for crimes and offences which had nothing to do with the war and to separate these from the rest the soldiers shouted to each prisoner, « Are you Belgian or French? ». The Germans were then left in their cells while we were ordered to come out. I huddled the blanket round my shivering body and crouched back against the wall so that the soldiers had to come right into the cage. « Madame de Beir? » he said. I was too terrified to reply so he repeated his question until, summoning all my courage, I looked up at him and faltered, « Yes, I'm Madame de Beir. What do you want? »

« Don't you remember me, Madam? » he said, I was billeted for two years in your sister's house at Bruges and you must have seen me there several times. I was also warned as one of the firing party for your execution three years ago. »

His voice seemed friendly enough so I said, « Perhaps it would have been better for me if I had been shot then. You don't know what privations and sufferings I've been through since. Only the hope of deliverance some day has kept me alive. Is all this suffering to count for nothing? Do you really grudge us the wretched daily crust we get here? » I grasped his sleeve and said, « Think of your own mother. Please don't kill us. »

« Kill you, madame, who put such ideas into your head? »

« Oh, please don't play with us. We know you Germans grudge us the bread we eat and the people have demanded that we should be killed. »

« Madame, you are terribly mistaken. We haven't come to kill you but to set you free! »

### **Freedom.**

I was so overcome at this that I fell back on the bed and burst into such a torrent of tears that the soldiers backed away from me saying, « You don't seem to understand, Madame. There's nothing to be afraid of. We have only come to set you free. »

Presently I calmed myself and told him of the fears aroused in us by the news of the peasant's murmurings and how those fears had been brought to a head by their own unexpected arrival at such a time. The recital brought all my fears back again and in an agony of mind I cried, « O Sir, don't mock at our misery. We have had our hopes raised so many times only to have them dashed again to pieces and we can now bear, no more. »

The soldier was at a loss what to do to calm my hysteria but gradually I got better and took in his repeated assurances that all was well. He said he himself and many other soldiers had revolted against

the war and had all been imprisoned. They had themselves been released the night before by their comrades and splitting up into groups had gone to the different prisons determined to free all war prisoners.

He enlarged on the coincidence which had sent to my relief the man who, three years earlier, had been waiting to shoot me. He said the coffin had actually been brought to the place of execution for me and he went on to say how glad the soldiers were to hear that the sentence would not be carried out. It was always a distasteful duty and the more so when the victim was a woman. He had heard, while billeted in Madame Forrier's house that I had been reprieved and sent to Delitzsch and when his party of released soldiers came to the prison he had asked the wardresses where I was. «Hurry up and dress, madame, you are leaving here to-day, I hope, never to return.»

In the meantime one of the wardresses had brought my own clothes and it took me only a few minutes to scramble into them and join my companions who were already hurrying down into the hall, looking very different in their own clothes after the horrible prison garb.

With the prison dress we seemed to have shed the gloom and dejection of the past three years and everyone was radiantly happy. Everyone, that is, save the grim wardresses who still seemed to bear ill-will towards us and to regret that we should soon be

beyond the reach of their tyranny cells, half — rations, and close confinement.

Presently the scanty morning meal was served to us. Everything just as usual, bitter 'ersatz' coffee and a hard dry crust, but it was our first meal in freedom and it tasted like nectar. We were free at last and would soon see our loved ones again. God be praised!

### Good-bye to Delitzsch.

In the fullness of our gratitude there was no time for resentment, even at the wardresses who had done so much to make our prison lives miserable and we all shook hands with them when, a little before mid-day, we passed through the prison gate, never to return.

On our arrival in Delitzsch we had been jeered and refuse had been thrown at us but now the people came to their doors and stared at the cavalcade with its escort of laughing soldiers but said... nothing at all! It was such a joy, our first taste of freedom, that even the bitter cold could do nothing to prevent us singing and shouting light-hearted gossiping down the lines. Red flags were flying everywhere and the people in the streets seemed all unsettled as if they did not know what would happen next.

When we got to the station our *train de luxe* was made up of castle trucks, but it would have been just as welcome had they been coal wagons. We changed

from this cattle-truck train for a more ordinary one at Leipzig and in this travelled for some twelve hours when we noticed, to our great consternation, that we were back in Leipzig again. What had happened? The soldiers who were escorting us explained that we had been brought back to avoid a conflict with the regular army which was on the march in the neighbourhood. They themselves and the majority of the population were revolutioners. This was by no means cheering news but the soldiers told us not to worry and, as a proof of their good will, brought us all big basins of soup. This, however, was not until we had been shut up in one of the engine-sheds at Leipzig for about eight hours and were once more almost in the depths of depression.

We set off again eventually but the same sort of game went on for five days and nights — now moving on towards Belgium, now stationary and often even going back on our tracks. The soldiers were hard put to it at times to find food for us although there was no lack of good will in their foraging, and they shared whatever they found with us, yet we were often as hungry as we had been at Delitzsch. We arrived eventually at a station near the Belgian frontier where we were very warmly welcomed by the people. This place was in the very heart of the revolutionary area and our escort had no need to forage the food, on the contrary the people hurried to give us the best of



such poor provisions as they had, a great roaring fire was lighted on the station platform and, for the first time for many a long day, we were really warm. Further on the roads were all blocked by the retreating German armies and for a whole day we were held up in this village, unable to proceed further on the way to freedom.

### **The Germans in Retreat.**

All day trains crowded with German soldiers arrived at the station. Perhaps 'uniformed rabble' would better describe them than 'troops'. They were all dispirited and exhausted men without any discipline or order. As they got out of the train, their arms were taken from them by the revolutionary soldiers and stacked in great heaps in a neighbouring field. They eagerly stripped off their own medal ribbons and the few officers among them, their badges of rank, and were then free to follow the red flag if they wanted to, but woe betide anyone who showed any signs of disapproval of the revolution.

This scene, reminded one irresistably of childhood's stories of the retreat from Moscow, and was a source of rejoicing and thanksgiving to all of us who had been in prison. These Germans who had arrived so arrogantly in Belgium at the beginning of the war were now in ignominious flight. When I had compared

these lordly Germans in 1914 with our wiry little Belgian soldiers, they had seemed something like the super-men. They had thought themselves to be, but now there was little to remind one of their boasted ever-victorious Army, smashing its way to Paris. Our little 'poilus' had brought German Goliath to the dust.

Our Te Deum on the station platform was no crowing over a beaten and discredited foe, but the expression of a deep conviction that in the end right is stronger than might.

### Home again!

The strain and fret of these last few days had, however, told on me more than I realised and I broke down completely on the threshold of Belgium and knew nothing of our triumphant home-coming until I woke up, feeling very weak and feeble, in a quiet clean hospital ward in a convent at Namur and learned that we had already been back for several days. Those of the party who were fit to travel had already gone their several ways but it was more than a fortnight before I could leave the good sisters for convalescence in the house of a Monsieur Handriaux. Nothing could equal the kindness and hospitality of this gentleman and indeed of the people of Namur generally, they vied with each other to shew us kindnesses and when in due course, I was sufficiently recovered another gentleman

offered to drive myself and two other Delitzch prisoners home in his car. These two were handed over to their friends at Ghent and soon afterwards I was myself back in my sister's house in Bruges.

### **Bruges.**

I can never hope to describe the joy of that homecoming. My brother-in-law never seemed to tire of shaking my hand especially as he said it would not now cost him 500 francs and a week in prison.

Ghislaine was in her room when I arrived and Madame Forrier had not summoned her when I came in for fear that the shock of seeing me alive again when she had thought me dead would prove too much for her but my sister now went up and broke the news gradually and we were soon in each other's arms... « Ghislaine... » « Mother!... » I strained her to my breast and, for a time, neither asked more of life than just to be together again.

### **P. P. C.**

My first visit the next day was to thank the Burgomaster, the Comte Visart de Bocarmé, for his timely intervention. I had heard the story of my reprieve from my sister the previous evening for the first time and my heart was full of gratitude to the grand old

man who had so courageously spoken up for me and, in effect, saved my life.

I was not equal to any long speech-making or elaborate expression of gratitude but the simple « Thank you » had a wealth of meaning which I am sure he realised.

He related, with a whimsical smile, his own account of what had taken place and said he had been so terrified when making the request for my reprieve that his knees were literally knocking together. Ghislaine, who accompanied me, also said a few words of gratitude and when we took our leave it was with a fervent prayer that God would bless this valiant old man and fill his remaining years with joy and happiness.

My sister had also told me that the Bishop of Bruges had ordered prayers to be said in the churches for me while I was under sentence and I next visited His Lordship to pay my respects and to thank him in person for his kindness.

The Bishop listened very patiently to my story and told me that he had parcels of food and clothing sent to me at intervals all through my absence. None of these had ever reached me, of course, though this additional proof of the Bishop's fatherly interest was none the less appreciated, now I could thank him in person.

## Dunkirk.

These reunions and visits made, my thoughts turn naturally enough to Dunkirk where I had left my younger daughter and where I might hope for news of my son Joseph.

Travelling in these early days of the peace was almost a nightmare but at long last I reached Dunkirk and found Maria safe and well. We were soon weeping tears of joy in each other's arms! Of Joseph, she had, however, heard nothing and I was left for some days yet in an agony of uncertainty as to his fate. Then, at last, with indescribable joy I heard that he had come unscathed through the hell of the war years and was on his way home again.

At the bookstall, my place had naturally been filled and although I could have displaced my successor with a word, as she had a family dependent on her I had not the heart to do so, therefore I made up my mind to settle down in Bruges.

Joseph had not yet been discharged from the army and, after I had disposed of my furniture and belongings, there was nothing to keep me in Dunkirk, so a few days later Maria and I walked once more into my sister's house at Bruges.

Ghislaine was still nursing the German wounded in the Hospital St. Jean and she remained faithfully at her post until she was able to shake the hand of her

last patient as he left for Germany and tell him, if he ever came across Admiral von Schroder, to say how well she had kept her promise.

So the days passed as we were trying in this renewal of family life to forget the horrors of the past. Our armies returned and the people went nearly mad with joy — the War was over!

### **Decorated.**

While I was still staying with Madame Forrier, two French officers of high rank waited on me to thank me in the name of France for my services. Then, gravely saluting, they pinned on my breast the French Croix de Guerre, and so was I honoured by brave men!

### **Au Revoir.**

Mme Forrier soon after my return re-opened her Hotel Pension and after I had been with her some time longer to gain experience I, too, started a similar establishment to welcome the numbers of visitors who soon flocked to Bruges attracted not alone now by the beauties of my beloved city, but, many of them, on pilgrimages to the battlefields and cemeteries of France and Belgium. So, safe home at last in my little hotel by the quiet waterways of Bruges, I occupy myself year in and year out with visitors hoping thus to forget the past and to merit some measure of happiness in the future.



## Appendix I.

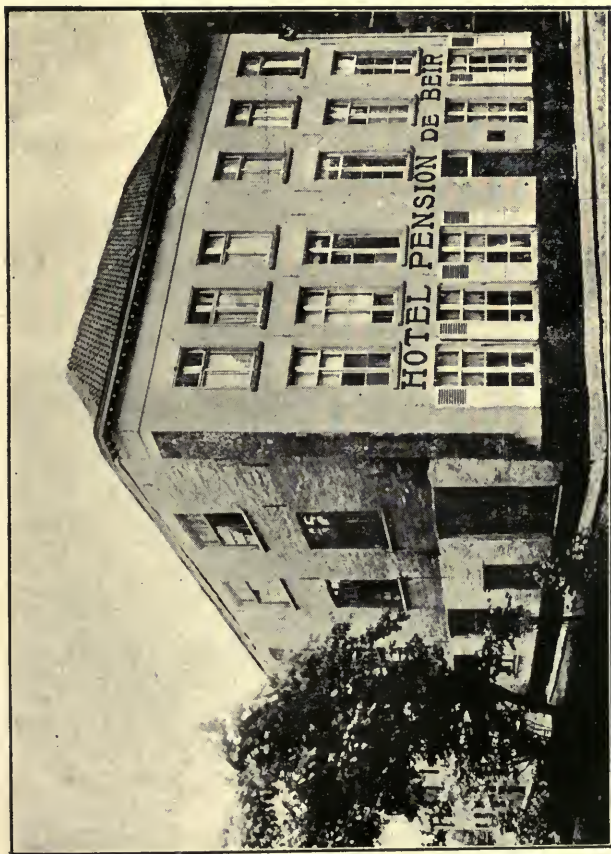
Calm reigned within the prison wall  
Twas time of rest and pious thought.  
The lilac and the chestnuts tall  
From neighb'ring park their perfume brought  
To Marie Mouton in her cell  
And Adrienne Beljean, loved so well.

That eve saith Marie, faint and low,  
Farewell to loved ones here below!  
My breath comes hard, I suffer so,  
Thy hand, dear sister, ere I go.  
But Adrienne, with tender care,  
Would calm her dear companion there  
With soft caress and one long kiss  
Ere passed her soul to heavenly bliss.  
In that prison cold and bare  
Died our gentle Marie there.  
All that knew her mourned that day,  
Pressed about her corse to pray,  
Lacking flowers for her bier  
Offer Mass of chant and tear.

The priest paternal comfort gave;  
Then forth they bore her to the grave!  
That grave is on a foreign strand,  
Far, far beyond her native land,

Memorial of her sacrifice  
Her patriotism's awful price.  
God in His mercy guard the maid  
Who died for Belgium, unafraid.

Now when the wars are no more  
And we sit by our own fireside,  
The dear memory of her we adore  
In our mem'ry shall ever abide.



Hotel de Beir, 18, Quai Saint Anne, Bruges.



## Appendix

(COPY)

**Office Central Belge  
pour les  
Prisonniers de Guerre  
à Bruxelles.**

Bruxelles, le 15 Février 1921.  
à Madame de Beir Jeanne  
Quai St Anne, 18,  
à Bruges.

Madame,

We have now received the moneys due to you for work done while in the Delitzch camp and if you will kindly return the enclosed receipt duly signed, a postal order for 8 fcs. 85 cms. will be sent to you.

This represents the sum of 7 marks pfennigs due to you on this account at the very favourable rate of exchange of 1.25 frs. to the mark, obtained by us under the Government decree concerning the possessions of repatriated prisoners.

Yours truly,  
pp. le Commandant Tresorier  
(sd.) SAVERYS.

My 37 months hard labour at Delitzch thus brouhgt me in the magnificent sum of 8.85 frs. (about 1/— English or 25 cents. American money)!

## HISTORY & SOUVENIRS OF BRUGES

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Bruges; the Flemish name of which is Burgge; is the chief Town of Flanders (Occidental); It is a large Town beautifully set in the midst of Trees avenues and canals and containing many interesting mementoes and relics of the middle ages. The old bridge from which Bruges originally derived its name was probably built in the time of Julius Caezer on the border of the Raye a little river formerly navigable but now obsorbed by canals. In 865 Baldwin constructed a new Castle (Burg), surrounded by ramparts. After that he founded a house destined to receive guests and a Chapel, where he transported the relics of St. Donatien, who afterwards became the Patron Saint of the Town of Bruges. By his courage and activity Baldwin obliged the Normans to respect her Frontiers and this assured him of the security of his Palace: Merchants soon noticed the advantages of the position of Bruges as a centre of commerce. Thus little by little Bruges developed into a Town of considerable population and importance and in the eleventh century, actually in 1006, a pest carired off 12.000 person. After this Baldwin continued his activities. He built walls which fixed the rights and liberties of the Town. He organized the local administration in dividing Bruges into



nine Guilds, he elected a Bishop and a first Magistrate or Mayor. Under the Count Thierry d'Alsace Bruges became a flourishing Town. In the year 1149 the Count Thierry returned from the Crusade wars in Palestine with the relic of the Holy Blood, which he received from King Baldwin III, the King of Jersulam. The Relic is conserved in a Chrystal Cylinder ornamented at each end by a golden crown and made in 1388. This Relic is habitually placed in a silver tabernacle, which was given to the Chapel of the Holy Blood by Isabel & Albert but on ceremonial occasions the relic is enclosed in a hexagon case made by the Bruges Jeweller Jean Crabbe in 1617. The Holy Blood Relic is the greatest treasure in Bruges, where there is annually carried out the Procession of the holy Blood, which goes through the principal Streets and is the cause of bringing large crowds of visitors from all parts of the world. From 1168, when Thierry d'Alsace died to 1279 when the Count of Flanders Gui Dampière came, Bruges was a calm Town, rapidly growing. The Count Son and successor of Margaret of Constantinople tried to take from the inhabitants many privileges accorded by his predecessors: This action caused, many insurections and led to many executions. Then there were formed two parties, one composed of followers of the King of France called Leliaerts or people from Lys. Many of this party were mounted Soldiers and were mostly

the principal people of the Town. The other party consisted of democrats and was composed of trades people and the working class, who were adherents of the Count. The discord between these two parties brought the intervention of Philippe le Bel, who for years had coveted Flanders. He arrived with a large Army on May 29th; 1301. He was received with great magnificence, balconies and facades were decorated most luxuriously, and the ladies of the Town donned their richest costumes to such an extent that Jeanne Navarre became ardently Jealous and cried out « I thought I was the only Queen in France but here I see 600 Round about me ». On his return to France Philippe appointed as Governor General of Flanders, Jacques de Chatillon, Brother of the Count St. Pol, the latter by the changes that he made in the laws of the Country and his tyrannical Government excited a hatred in the hearts, of the people, which burst forth by the rising up of Peter de Coninc an energetic Brugeois, formerly a weaver. This man was full of an irresistible eloquence and he placed himself at the head of all the discontented people. He and 25 master workmen were arrested and thrown into prison. This was no sooner done than the working class banded together and set them at liberty. Some Magistrates were massacred and others were thrown into the prison by the democrats. The Governor began to endeavour to re-establish his authority. He confiscated the rights

and privileges of the people. The latter applied to Philippe, who confirmed the Acts of the Governor. The discontent continued and in May 1302 to the shouts of « Friends all that is French is false, kill the French » 1600 men; headed by Peter de Coninc and Jan Breydel, guarded the entrances and exits of the Town and all who could not pronounce the Flemish phrase « Schilt in de vrient » were put to death. At the end of the day two thousand soldiers and many other had perished. Chatillon and some other Aristocrates fled. In the beginning of July 1302 all Flanders revolted against the King of France. The Brugeois Jan Breydel and Peter de Coninc headed an Army and met the French at Groeningen near Courtrai on Wednesday July 11th: 1302. This was the end. The Flemish carried the victory of the Battle of the Golden Spurs. The Statue of the Flemish heroes, unveiled on July 11th; 1889 on the Grand Place of Bruges commemorates the grand work of the two victors. In 1362 the prosperity of the Town of Bruges rendered the Brugeois as proud and hard hearted as the Lords were exacting and severe. On one occasion they were on the side of the Count and the next moment they were in favour of the Flemish Commoners, according to where their profit lay. They were continually in opposition to the Gentois and often fought against them. Towards the middle of the fifteenth century Bruges was the Metropolis of Europe:

In 1456, 150 strange ships entered the harbours of Bruges in one day. The town which had then reached the height of her splendour then boasted of 52 Guilds and according to the Chroniclers, out of 150.000 inhabitants 50.000 workmen were employed in the Docks. The circulation of workpeople at certain times of the day was so strong that the Magistrates had to order a bell to be rung to invite Mothers to withdraw their children from the Streets. The Bridges were not allowed to be lifted whilst the bell was ringing. On the 15th: of June 1467 Philippe l'Asseure, the richest Prince of his time died in his Palace named Princenhof. In 1468 Charles le Téméraire married at Damme Marguerite Duchess of York, Sister of Edward IVth: who, chased from England by Warick in 1471, came to live in the Gruithuis at Bruges and the Castle at Oostcamp was also used by him until circumstances permitted him to return to his Kingdom, Mary of Burgundy came to the Trone on the 16th: of January 1477: She was engaged to the Duke of Bavaria, on the 21st: of April of the same year who, under the title of Maximilien of Austria, made his triumphal entry into Flanders. The Son of Marguerite and Maximilien; Philippe le Beau, was born on June 22nd: 1478 in Bruges, where his Mother lived constantly until her death. On the 28th of: June 1485 Maximilien was inaugurated as Regent of the Country and the education of his Son was given into his hands.

Bruges, which during two Centuries had been the most important commercial Town in Europe, full of riches and prosperity, began in the fifteenth century to decline. The cause of this decline was largely due to the draining of the Zwin Canal, which was a source of communication between Bruges and the sea. The civil disorganization under the government of Maximilien; and his frequent departures from Bruges, safety for properties disappeared Merchants withdrew from Bruges towards Antwerp and from this time business gradually estranged itself from this quarter. In 1495 between four and five thousand houses were unoccupied. Hostilities and misery continued until 1500. The severity of Charles Quint, who was nominated Count of Flanders on the 22nd April 1515, together with the severity of Philippe II caused many other industrial troubles, and many of the leaders of industry retired to England. In 1558 Bruges became a Bishopric. From this date until 1704, when the Hollandaise bombarded the Town, nothing of importance happened. In 1708 the French took Bruges which was afterwards taken by Marlborough, and was in 1745 retaken by the French, when the King entered on July 29th: In 1748 Bruges like the rest of Flanders, returned under the Austrian Government. During the French domination from 1794 to 1815 Bruges was the chief place of departure for La Leys. Napoleon visited the Town in 1804 and in 1810. Until 1830 Bruges had



preserved her ancient appearance more than any other Town of the Middle Ages. Her old houses, picturesque Avenues and ornamental sculpturing form an agreeable combination. Bruges boasts of 52 bridges, and 300 Streets many of which have foreign names. The Town is surrounded by beautiful Avenues, which form an agreeable promenade: There are seven Ports of entrance, composed of old gateways in stone; these being very ancient and fine examples of early architecture. During thirty years Bruges has been full of promises, works of restoration and beautification have earned for the Town the little of « The Nuremburg of Flanders » and the population is steadily increasing. The Town was occupied by the Germans from October 14th: 1914 until October 18th: 1918. Happily she was saved from their hands. During many years two Arts have been predominant in Bruges, namely painting and architecture. The works of ancient painters are mostly conserved in the Museums of the Town.

*Notre Dame Church* owes its origin to a chapel founded in 744 by Saint Boniface in the vicinity of Syseele, about 3/4 of a century later the chapel was transferred from Syseele and rebuilt on the present site of Notre Dame. In 961 Notre Dame was raised to the dignity of a Parish Church and to that of a collegiate in 1091. After a destructive fire in 1116 it was restored by Charles the Good Count of Flandres. No-





Lake of Love (Lac d'amour).



Green Quay (Quai vert).



tre Dame possesses the loftiest tower ever built of brick, this tower reaches a height of 400 feet.

At the foot of the tower, there is a beautiful annex of the latter part of « the 15th. century formerly the portal called « Paradise » and now converted into a baptistery, this is a jewel of architecture. Notre Dame boasts of fine stained Glass Windows and many remarkable paintings. Picture by David title The Transfiguration (1500). Ysenbrandt's mater Dolorosa (1530). Pourbus Adoration of the Shepherds etc.

The statue of the Virgin and the child Jesus which is cut in white marble, which came from Carrara gives us a good insight as to the capabilities of Michael Angelo, as a sculpturor (1504). The tribune of the Lords of Gruuthuse (1472) where they assisted in the divine service without leaving their palace. The *pulpit* dates from 1743 and is magnificent work in carved oak.

*The Basilica of the Holy Blood* erected in about the year 1529 stands at the western side of the Town Hall and on the upper floor of the *Saint Basil Chapel* the latter dating from 1130.

Please to take notice that in the chapel of the Holy Blood are kept some drops of Christ's Blood which are contained in a glass phial. The Blood was brought from the Holy Land in 1149 by Thierry d'Alsace Count of Flanders. The famous procession of the Holy

Blood takes place every year on the Monday following the 2nd of may.

*The Hall or old Market* standing on the Grand Place is a three storeyed Gothic edifice, which has a battlement, and a sloping tiled roof. The most conspicuous feature of this building is the Belfry, a Gigantic tower which soars to a height of 262 feet. Every quarter of an hour the world famous bells ring rapturing melodies which arrest the attention, of everyone within their hearing ». In Longfellows poem « *The Carillon* » the poet describes the effect of the bells upon him in the words!

« Thus dreamed I, as by night I lay in Bruges, at the Fleur de Blé, Listening with a wild delight, to the chimes that through the night » Rang their charges from the Belfry.

The old Hall or Market was first built in 1240 and was used as a general Bazaar where everything was sold. The east wing was termed the spice Market. The west was devoted to haberdashery until 1819 when the butchers took over possession. The first floor was known as the Pandhall. Here the famous May fair was held. On one occasion the Major received the King of France, at a Sumptuous banquet in this hall in 1302; and in 1326 Louis de Nevers was therein imprisoned.

*The Museum of the « Gruuthuse »* was built in 1465. and was formerly a Castle belonging to Lords of the same name. Here there is a magnificent collection of over 400 pieces of lace and much china which was left to the town by the late Baron Liedts.

*The Palace of Justice* dates from 1725 and was built on the site of the old palace of the counts of Flandres, erected by Boudouin the first and reconstructed by Charles the Good. It contains the, famous chimney called the cheminée du Franc, constructed of black marble by Guyot de Blaeugrant after the drawings of Lan- celoot Blondeel. The higher portion is pannelled in carved oak.

*The Hospital of Saint John* dates from the 12th century and has been but little altered. The museum contains several master-pieces of Charles Memlinc (1435-1494) c. z. The shrine of Saint Ursula is very magnificent in colour and comprises 18 subjects. The Church and the Pharmacy of the hospital also contain some, very interesting objects.

*The Town Hall*, stands on the Place du Bourg. The foundation stone was laid by Count Louis de Maele, in 1376.

The 48 niches in the façade, are ornamented with statues of the counts of Flandres. The blue stone



stairs in the front hall, lead to a balcony from which the counts used to swear fidelity to the city and to maintain its privileges and laws.

The great staircase on the left leads to the, splendid Gothic Hall of Aldermen's Hall. There is a Gothic Chimney and roof, and there are some very beautiful frescoes by the brothers A and B De Vriendt of Antwerp, these represent scenes from the History of Bruges at the period of the communes.

*The Church of Jerusalem* (1426) is situated at the end of the Rue Jerusalem and is peculiar in style inside, as well as out. It was founded by the brothers Peter and James Adornes. There are to be seen a crypt or tomb of Christ, a touch-stone mausoleum with recumbent effigies of Anselme Adornes and his wife six stained glass windows representing the founders and members of their families also several old interesting objects in the vestry.

*The English Couvent* number « 87 » situated in the Rue des Carmes has an altar composed of 22 pieces of rare Persian and Egyptian marble and was constructed in Rome. There are also several pictures worthy of notice. The Duke of York his sister Mary widow of William of Orange visited the above convent in January 1657.



*The Guild Hall of the Archers.* Saint Sebastian's Hall stand in the same street and was founded before 1096 and formed in the middle ages the bodyguard of the counts of Flanders.

The guild bought this building in 1573. Charles II King of England and his brother the Duke of Gloucester amused themselves here with archery during their exile. The King signed the Golden Book of the Guild on August 3rd 1656. The Duke bestowed on the Guild a silver arrow with his armorial bearings and his name. There are also to be seen in this hall two silver cups given by Queen Victoria of England and a very interesting collection of old pictures and portraits.

*At the Port Saint Croix* just behind the *Barracks* there is a memorial erected by the English nuns of the Rue des Carmes to mark the spot where Captain Fryatt was shot. On the eve of Captain Fryatt's execution, word reached the Reverend Mother, of the English Convent that the unfortunate Captain had not had a change of linen since his arrest. At this the Prioress sent what she could so that the Gallant sea-man had at least the satisfaction of facing death in clean underclothes.

*Saint Sauveur Cathedral of Bruges* lies to the south West of the Grand Place in the Rue des Pierres.

St Eloy is believed to have founded a small chapel in wood on this site which was accidentally burnt down and was rebuilt on a larger scale. The interior of Saint Saviours Cathedral is in Gothic Architecture which gains in homeliness by the colouring of the walls, ceilings and fluted piers. The oldest parts of the cathedral are in Gothic architecture.

Inside there is splendid stained Glass windows and above all, many pictures of old Painters e. g. Claessens 1608, G. Seghers 1620, Maes 1640, P. Van Oost 1630, De Deyster 1650, Zuelllyn 1666, Van Orley 1725, etc. The rood-screen (1680) of black and white marble is well worth noticing. The pulpit (1778) the sculpturing of which took 8 years and cost 42.000 francs.

The carved oak stalls (XVth century) in the choir are adorned with the coats of arms of the Knights who assisted here at the thirteenth chapter of the Golden Fleece, held in this very Church in 1478. In the north west corner are the arms of Edward IV of England. In the choir are exposed 8 magnificent tapestries.

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